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ABSTRACT

This toolkit explains how to get started with a collaborative process of professional development that includes selecting best practices and identifying ways to put them into action. It is a companion to an online resource, "The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning." The loom as a metaphor suggests a work in progress, a workspace where selected and varied threads are drawn together to craft a cohesive, useful fabric. This guide helps education leaders facilitate professional development through collaborative activities that use knowledge loom content to guide improved teaching and learning. The activities are divided into modular steps: (1) selecting a theme (understanding collaborative inquiry, selecting a theme, and getting acquainted with the Knowledge Loom); (2) reviewing best practices (reviewing/selecting best practices, identifying evidence, and planning next steps); (3) analyzing success stories (finding virtual benchmarking partners, analyzing cause and effect data, and identifying performance gaps); (4) identifying support resources (broadening, deepening, and sharing knowledge); and (5) action planning and dissemination (articulating long-term goals, milestones, and action items and sharing success stories). Four appendixes include a glossary, reproducible activity organizers, evaluation forms, and references. (SM)

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Using the Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development.

Mary Anne Mather

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The Knowledge Loom

What Works in Teaching & Learning

Using The Knowledge Loom

Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development

A Guidebook for Professional Development Facilitators and Participants

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By Mary Anne Mather

LAB

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The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory

a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University

The LAB, a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of ten educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Our goals are to improve teaching and learning, advance school improvement, build capacity for reform, and develop strategic alliances with key members of the region's education and policymaking community.

The LAB develops educational products and services for school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and parents in New England, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Central to our efforts is a commitment to equity and excellence. Information about LAB programs and services is available by contacting:

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School Change Network, Inc., a consulting company in Somerville, Massachusetts, works with the education industry to develop Web-based resources for collaborative online professional development.

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Introduction

Overview

Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development

A Guidebook for professional development facilitators and participants

> *"A loom in my classroom is a device for weaving fibers to create a stronger, durable fabric. This Knowledge Loom has possibilities for 'weaving' educators together through collaboration and shared practices to create a stronger educational environment."*
>
> K-12 Art Teacher

Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development provides a how-to resource for getting started with a collaborative process of professional development that includes selecting best practices and identifying ways to put them into action. While completing the activities in the Guidebook, you will be using *The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching and Learning* Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org) as a content resource. The loom as a metaphor suggests a work in progress, a workspace where selected and varied threads are drawn together to craft a cohesive, unique, and useful fabric. Think about this Guidebook as a professional development resource loom where some threads have been collected for you, and others can be discovered and selected by you as your professional development process develops.

Some professional development facilitators and education leaders will find that following all the steps and activities in the Guidebook fits just right with their school improvement planning needs. Others will find that many of the activities can be modified and integrated into already-existing workshops and planned group interactions. As any team of educators uses The Knowledge Loom's content and the Guidebook's activities to move forward with a collaborative process of decision-making and benchmarking, other appropriate and related activities will most likely emerge. These can be integrated into the activities this Guidebook presents and be inserted into its binder.

Whether you add activities to those presented in the Guidebook or extract activities from the Guidebook to add to your own programs, The Knowledge Loom's content and the Guidebook's procedures can be powerful tools for planning effective professional development.

The Knowledge Loom and this Guidebook are not the only tools you will need to institute positive changes in teaching and learning. Some schools will need supplementary resources to help analyze data to pinpoint areas in need of improvement. Others will have already-existing school improvement activities in place and find that this Guidebook leads them to best practice resources, and more specifically, to a way of thinking about professional development initiatives and programs as ongoing, collaborative, and reflective.

School improvement is a process that does not end after an action plan for one or two goals has been set. It requires acting on your plan, systematically revisiting and monitoring results, and returning to The Knowledge Loom and other similar quality resources for information and inspiration as new needs arise.

Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development is designed as a model for planning school improvement through collaborative inquiry, using the proven practices presented on *The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching and Learning* Web site to influence choices and actions.

Think of this Guidebook and its binder as your loom for collecting materials to influence exemplary teaching and learning.

Quick Start

Who should use the Guidebook?

K-12 education leaders and professional development facilitators seeking strategies and resources to develop school improvement through collaborative activities can use this Guidebook to support and augment their planning and training initiatives. This includes district and school professional development and curriculum coordinators, administrators, school improvement team leaders, department heads, and technical assistance organizations that facilitate professional development.

How can the Guidebook be used?

The Guidebook is a companion to *The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning* Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org). It is a tool to help education leaders facilitate professional development through collaborative activities that use Knowledge Loom content to guide improved teaching and learning. Although individuals can use the activities for learning and reflection, the greatest power lies in completing them in collegial study groups in order to influence whole-school change.

How is the Guidebook organized?

After the brief introductory sections, the activities are divided into modular steps. Although the steps can be completed in any order, completing Step 1 first is essential. After completing Step 1, you might choose to work linearly through all the steps for a systematic, multi-encounter approach to professional development, or you might choose only to complete selected steps. Experienced professional developers will find that many of the activities can be modified and integrated into their already-existing workshops and planned group interactions.

How are the modular steps organized?

Each step consists of:

- A table of contents
- An overview of the activities and the concepts presented
- A Loom Locations section (which locates The Knowledge Loom content needed to complete the activities)
- Step-by-step directions for completing each activity
- Facilitator notes, and
- Activity organizers where participants can document decisions.

Do I need to be online to complete the activities?

Although The Knowledge Loom is an online resource, in most cases the content for each activity can be downloaded, copied, and distributed for use off-line. Activities that require using the site's online tools can be completed individually as a follow-up to the off-line group work.

How do I get started?

Read the three brief introductory sections About The Knowledge Loom, The Knowledge Loom and Professional Development, and Using The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Consider taking the online tour of The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) to acquaint yourself with how the site's content is organized. Then assemble a cohort of colleagues to complete Step 1: Select a Theme. Once you have identified a focus theme for your school's improvement efforts, either complete the rest of the steps in order, or select only those that best serve your needs. Completing all the steps supports a long-term planning process for improved teaching and learning.

About The Knowledge Loom

What is The Knowledge Loom?

The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning (http://knowledgeloom.org) is an online resource designed for interactive use by educators and education leaders, professional development coordinators, technical assistance organizations, and policymakers. This Guidebook is a companion to The Knowledge Loom Web site. It is primarily a tool to help education leaders facilitate professional development through collaborative activities that use Knowledge Loom content to guide and improve teaching and learning. On The Knowledge Loom, users can:

- Review research that identifies best practices related to various themes.
- View stories about the practices in schools/districts.
- Learn to replicate the success of these practices in their own organizations.
- Add stories, knowledge, and questions to the collections.
- Participate in online events and discussions.
- Discover supporting organizations and resources.

What is in it for you?

Use The Knowledge Loom collections to locate specific information when you need it for school improvement planning and inspiration. Pose important questions and get answers from others knowledgeable in the field. Contribute your own expertise via the many interactive components. The Knowledge Loom is a place where researchers and practitioners come together to exchange ideas and information about what works in teaching and learning. All educators can benefit from studying the stories and practices, exploring the links to other sites, and reviewing the ideas presented in the panel discussions and other online tools. Sometimes professional growth simply means finding colleagues with whom you can discuss and develop ideas and inspirations. The Knowledge Loom presents many opportunities to exchange ideas with colleagues and broaden your understanding about effective education practice, whether the colleagues are in your own school/district or across the country.

Why a Knowledge Loom?

The loom as a metaphor suggests a work in progress, a workspace where selected and varied threads are drawn together to craft a cohesive, unique, and useful fabric.

The Knowledge Loom* Web site presents an online workspace where education-minded users can select and weave distributed threads of information and experience in such a way as to create a fabric of best practices most suited to their own conditions, needs, and visions for excellence in teaching and learning. The Knowledge Loom provides the content that supports collaborative professional development initiatives.

* The name Knowledge Loom is used with permission from the Kellogg Foundation.

Where does The Knowledge Loom content originate?

The content comes from many places:

- Technical assistance partner organizations, some funded by the United States Department of Education;
- Private educational products and services developers/providers;
- Individual teachers and administrators in schools and districts nationwide; and
- You! The Knowledge Loom is available for all its users to add their own threads of wisdom and experience to the content through online interactive tools.

The Knowledge Loom regularly develops and spotlights best-practices information about topics that concern educators today. These include literacy, equity, technology, math/science, school organization, community involvement, professional development, and others.

How did we get started?

In October 1998 the United States Department of Education assigned resources to the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB), a program of The Education Alliance, to develop a "...sustainable, customer-driven, distributed repository/database of information on best practices in teaching and learning."

After talking to many educators, we realized that a repository was not enough. Our vision was The Knowledge Loom—a comprehensive electronic environment that moves from information delivery to information creation, from data to people, from a learning library to a learning community. This Guidebook is a continuation of that work as it aims to bring the best-practices content presented on The Knowledge Loom to districts, schools, and classrooms through collaborative professional development activities that are both practical and innovative.

The Knowledge Loom and Professional Development

"Every conversation between two professionals is professional development. When schools are designed so that teachers have time to talk to one another and have input into curricular design, implementation, and school policy decisions, then teachers will possess the authority to develop and implement solutions to the challenges they face."

Aaron Listhaus, K-12 Classroom Teacher, Long Island, NY

Perspectives on Professional Development

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In its report, "Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success," the National Education Association's (NEA) National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) recommends that schools take the following "necessary actions":

- **Find time for continuous professional development.**

  To keep up with change, teachers need to set aside time to collaborate with their colleagues and update their knowledge and skills—as professionals in other fields are required to do.

- **Help teachers assume responsibility for their own professional development.**

  To ensure the quality of teaching, teachers need to take a proactive role in shaping their future training directives.

The NFIE report is not alone in its call for new approaches to professional development, not only for teachers, but for all educators. "New approaches to instruction will require new ways of supporting, preparing, and strengthening teachers. Holding teachers accountable to curriculum and performance standards is not enough; we must also change the processes that lead to classroom learning," states the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). "Collective analysis is perhaps the most valuable part of this process."

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), in its document "Principles for Professional Development," notes that "effective professional development expects teachers to be intellectually engaged with ideas and resources" and that "professional development ought to take a variety of forms."

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) views high-quality professional development programs as essential to creating schools in which all students and staff members are learners who continually improve their performance. NSDC's revised 2001 Standards for Staff Development can be found online at http://www.nsdc.org/educatorindex.html. The standards emphasize collaboration among educators, the use of data and research to inform decisions, and the use of multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

The best practices for effective professional development posted on The Knowledge Loom are in tune with all of these sources (see http://knowledgeloom.org/pd or page 10 in this section).

Professional Development and School Improvement

The message is clear: Teachers and other education professionals need to engage in professional development activities outside of traditional after-school workshops and in-service days; and professional development must focus not only on curriculum, but on school improvement goals overall. The Knowledge Loom is a unique platform for moving your school's professional development approaches in this direction.

The LAB is strong in its belief that professional development is key to whole-school change that can have a profound effect on student achievement, and its work supports the perspectives of nationally respected professional organizations most focused on teacher development. The LAB embraces a process known as **collaborative inquiry** to assist schools in becoming active communities of learners. *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* is organized around this process of collaborative inquiry. The Guidebook asks that a group of educators, such as a school improvement team, come together to explore The Knowledge Loom content and decide how best to make use of it in light of their own school or organization.

Professional Development and This Guidebook

The Guidebook provides tools and strategies to help teams:

- Identify questions that matter to their schools;
- Design investigations using material about best practices from The Knowledge Loom; and
- Solve problems using reliable information that makes sense for their own school improvement efforts.

Note:	Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

This is accomplished in five steps:

Step One: Select a Theme

Step Two: Review Best Practices

Step Three: Analyze Success Stories

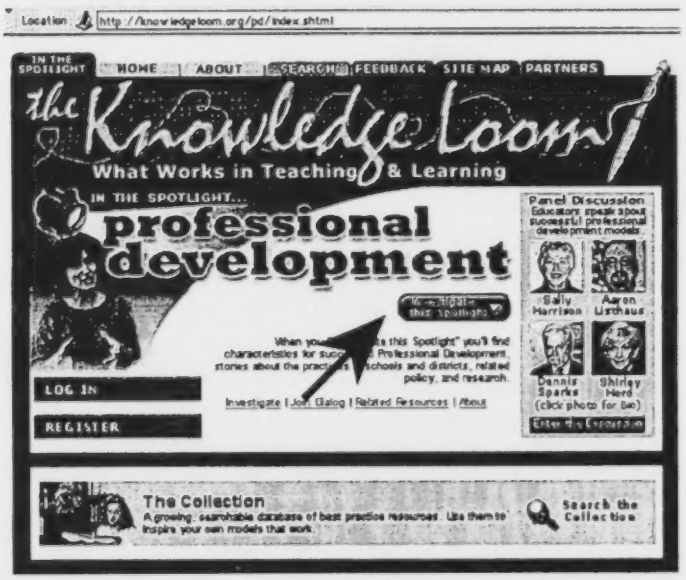
Step Four: Identify Support Resources

Step Five: Action Planning and Dissemination

Although the steps presented in the Guidebook can be completed in any order, completing Step 1 first is essential, because it further describes collaborative inquiry and guides the identification of a **focus theme** that will become central to all the collaborative activities.

Spotlight on Best Practices for Effective Professional Development

As part of your first tour of The Knowledge Loom Web site, consider visiting the spotlight on best practices in Professional Development (http://knowledgeloom.org/pd), reproduced in part on page 10. On The Knowledge Loom, you can explore a list of best practices, view the research and stories supporting these practices, join a panel discussion with experts, or post your own thoughts online.



Click the "**Investigate this Spotlight**" button to view the list of practices and links to related school success stories and research.

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Best Practices for Effective Professional Development Found on The Knowledge Loom

Many factors contribute to an effective and successful professional development initiative. These principles of effective professional development are among those identified from the findings of recent research and reports of expert opinion. They focus attention on professional development strategies for improving students' learning over time.

- Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
- Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.
- Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.
- Professional development should be organized around collaborative problem solving.
- Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.
- Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students and (b) the instruction and other processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned.
- Professional development should provide opportunities to gain an understanding of the theory underlying the knowledge and skills being learned.
- Professional development should be connected to a comprehensive change process focused on improving student learning.

See Appendix D for further references supporting the effectiveness of collaborative inquiry and other professional development processes.

Using The Knowledge Loom Guidebook

Overview

This Guidebook is a companion to *The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning* Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org). It is a tool to help education leaders facilitate professional development through collaborative activities that use Knowledge Loom content to guide improved teaching and learning. Although individuals can use the activities for learning and reflection, the greatest power lies in completing them in collegial study groups in order to influence whole-school change. *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* can help you get started using **best practices** presented on The Knowledge Loom for local staff development and school improvement efforts. Consider these approaches:

Workshops

Use the activity organizers and processes outlined in the Guidebook to organize a series of workshops on best practices focused on a theme of your choice. By choosing to complete all five steps over time, a cohesive year-long professional development initiative can be planned. By using The Knowledge Loom in this way, the school can select **benchmarks** (or best practices) that can become targeted parts of its improvement plan; and by developing corresponding **performance indicators** (i.e., evidence), the effectiveness of that plan can systematically be measured.

Team Efforts

Planning teams can use the Guidebook to design meetings and other ongoing small-group work. Turn school improvement planning into a professional development experience by having participants use the activity organizers that accompany each activity to document needs, progress, and shared decision-making. These organizers can even be used as a demonstration of contact hours and submitted for professional development points.

Independent Study

Although we advocate using the Guidebook for ongoing collaborative inquiry among colleagues, educators can still benefit from using the activities, organizers, and, in particular, the resources and interactive tools on The Knowledge Loom on their own as thinking and reflection tools. Completed activity organizers can be submitted as a demonstration of participation for professional development points.

Note: Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

Continuing the Process

It is important to point out that *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* is only a beginning. And it is not the only tool you will need in order to institute positive changes in teaching and learning. School improvement is an ongoing process and obviously does not end after an action plan for one or two goals has been set. It requires acting on your plan, systematically revisiting and monitoring results, and returning to The Knowledge Loom and other similar quality resources for information and inspiration as new needs arise. These are important next steps in advancing school improvement.

How the Guidebook is Organized

After the Overview, Quick Start, and three brief introductory sections, the activities are divided into modular steps (five in all). Although the steps can be completed in any order, completing Step 1 first is essential. After completing Step 1, you might choose to carry out steps in consecutive order for a systematic, multi-encounter approach to professional development, or you might choose only to complete selected steps. Each step has three components:

Introductory Material

Take time to read through the introductory material before going on to the activities. This material gives an overview of all the activities included in that step, outlines the concepts that underlie the activities, and points to where you will find information on The Knowledge Loom to help complete the activity organizers.

Step-by-Step Descriptions of Activities and Related Activity Organizers

Step-by-step directions make it easy for any facilitator to lead a team through each suggested activity. Activity organizers related to each activity provide a template for organizing, analyzing, and sharing information, and encourage reflection on the professional development process with suggestions for how to document it. The Guidebook also includes examples of completed activity organizers to clarify the directions.

Follow-up and Extension Activities

Follow-up and extension activities are included in each step. Many of these encourage participation in The Knowledge Loom community through posting thoughts, experiences, and ideas online for others to see. The ability to connect with colleagues outside of the school or district is an important benefit of using The Knowledge Loom for professional growth, and these follow-up activities should not be overlooked. Try to complete as many as possible. Online contributions add threads of experience and wisdom that are helpful to others in the broader education community.

Notes for Facilitators

As a professional development facilitator, you are under pressure to present ideas and content that educators can use immediately in their jobs. The Knowledge Loom and *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development* can help! Throughout the Guidebook, look for Notes for Facilitators. This section appears just before the activity organizers in each step. The notes present tips and ideas for effectively using the activities and resources explained in each step. Some general ideas for using the Guidebook follow.

Ideas for Workshops

As you plan workshops and other professional get-togethers around issues related to school improvement, use the Guidebook for creating meaningful collaborative activities. Each of the activity organizers that accompany the activities in the Guidebook builds on the previous ones, but most of the activities also can be completed independently of the others and integrated into your own, already-existing workshop and activity designs. Consider designing a semester- or year-long series of mini-workshops (two to three hours each), designed around the concepts presented in each step in the Guidebook.

Ideas for Teams

School improvement teams or groups of educators can use the Guidebook together as a basis for ongoing work. The activity organizers can serve as a foundation for an ongoing conversation about school improvement goals. The Knowledge Loom contains numerous resources (e.g., lists of best practices, supporting research, success stories, and Web links), and a team approach can help provide a manageable way to review, assess, and use those resources. Consider splitting up resources among a number of different teams and having these teams report to one another regularly.

Ideas for Individuals

If you are in contact with individual educators who are looking to pursue professional development on their own time, direct them to use the Guidebook for structured independent study about improving classroom practice. Completed activity organizers and postings on The Knowledge Loom Web site document independent study. Time spent on completing these tasks can be used to determine contact hours to be granted for independent work.

Adding Your Ideas

As you work with groups, you might develop your own activities inspired by the Guidebook. You could not only add these to your binder, but we encourage you to send them to The Knowledge Loom team. In addition, please share your ideas by using the evaluation from Appendix C. The Knowledge Loom team is interested in regularly evaluating and expanding this resource. Your input is extremely helpful.

Notes for Professional Development Participants

As a busy educator, you are most interested in the take-away value that any professional development opportunity presents—"How can I use this information in my school tomorrow or next week?" Consider the Guidebook as the take-away value you get from participation in The Knowledge Loom community. Whether you are using it with a planning team, as part of a workshop, or on your own to discover best practices and how others are putting them into action, it can help you to turn the ideas and information presented on The Knowledge Loom into action in your own classroom, school, or district.

Each step of the Guidebook—five in all—includes activity organizers that help to structure the activities and document your decisions. The organizers progressively take you through the process of identifying an improvement goal and working toward that goal. As you use the activity organizers, you will spend time reading and evaluating resources found on The Knowledge Loom and then begin tying them to your own school improvement activities.

Ideas for Individuals

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If you are in a situation where collaborative professional development activities are not offered, consider organizing a team of colleagues and using the Guidebook to direct your cohort. Although we advocate using the Guidebook for ongoing collaborative inquiry among colleagues, educators can also benefit from using the activities, organizers, and, in particular, the resources and interactive tools on The Knowledge Loom on their own for thinking and reflection.

Getting Credit

If it is necessary for you to use The Knowledge Loom Web site and Guidebook independently of a formal professional development offering in your school or district, investigate the possibility of getting professional development credit for your Knowledge Loom work. For anyone who wants to pursue this further, gathering support from the school or district is an important first step in being able to turn this into a recognized professional development opportunity. You can use the completed activity organizers and online entries that you make on The Knowledge Loom Web site as demonstration of contact hours.

Step 1: Select a Theme

Concepts: Understanding Collaborative Inquiry, Selecting a Focus Theme, Getting Acquainted with The Knowledge Loom and its Spotlights

Step 1: Select a Theme

Concepts: Understanding Collaborative Inquiry, Selecting a Focus Theme, Getting Acquainted with The Knowledge Loom and its Spotlights

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- Activity Organizer 1.1—Select a Focus Theme
- Activity Organizer 1.2—Input Your Ideas
- Activity Organizer 1.3—Learning From Colleagues

Overview

Although this Guidebook is designed to be modular—the user is able to select and complete various steps from the five offered, based on need and interest—it is essential that users complete Step 1 before any of the others. Step 1 supports the selection of a **focus theme** for school improvement and initiates a **collaborative inquiry** process whereby colleagues work together to articulate goals, understandings, and actions related to the selected theme.

The content base for the school improvement activities offered in the Guidebook is The Knowledge Loom Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org), which is structured as a set of theme-based **spotlights**. Spotlights offer organized collections of best-practice resources along with interactive tools that encourage personal reflection and collegial discussion.

School teams will use already-existing documents such as school improvement plans, district mandates, student performance scores, and such to select a focus theme. The work with this Guidebook begins when a selected focus theme matches a Knowledge Loom spotlight.

ACTIVITIES

You will discuss your identified school improvement needs; these are your focus themes. Then select one focus theme that correlates with a Knowledge Loom spotlight. In the Step 1 extension activity, you will respond to a key question found online in the "Input Your Ideas" section of that spotlight, and then you will review the responses of your colleagues. You may wish to follow up this activity with a face-to-face discussion. A participants' evaluation form is provided for your convenience in Appendix C.

DURATION

1 $^{1}/_{2}$ hours, plus about 30 minutes for the extension activity. (After people have completed the "Input Your Ideas" extension activity, they may want to schedule time to discuss what was discovered.)

PREPARATION

This overview and the section, Why School Improvement Through Collaborative Inquiry?, can be copied and distributed to introduce participants to important concepts and processes used in this step.

Note: Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

Why School Improvement Through Collaborative Inquiry?

"I wish I had more time to get together with my colleagues. I learn the most from talking with other educators."

Teacher comment from The Knowledge Loom

Many teachers say that the best kind of professional development comes from talking with other teachers. They can learn what their colleagues think about issues in their school and get advice that is practical and relevant. This Guidebook is predicated on the value of educators talking together, sharing their insights, and asking questions together. The activities are most effectively accomplished through a process known as **collaborative inquiry**. It asks that a group of educators, such as a school improvement team, come together to explore The Knowledge Loom content and decide how best to make use of it in light of the needs of their own school or organization.

According to the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching (NPEAT), high-quality professional development "should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn" and "should be organized around collaborative problem solving" (NPEAT, http://www.npeat.org/dialogue.html). Rather than relying only on quick-fix solutions generated by outside experts, collaborative inquiry asks that school-based practitioners locate, create, and analyze knowledge that makes sense for their own context and situation. There are many forms of collaborative inquiry: study circles, action research, and data-driven team planning, among others.

Collaborative inquiry as a formal process may be unfamiliar to some educators, yet it reflects current research about what constitutes high-quality professional development. Although information can be garnered through individual study, it is the process of negotiating meaning that propels us to deeper levels of understanding of content and concepts. This is true for our K–12 students, as well as for adults. Collaboration and inquiry are the cornerstones of good teaching and learning.

Both parts of the term collaborative inquiry are crucial. School improvement is a demanding challenge, and it requires that educators work together to build relationships and to collectively solve larger educational problems. This Guidebook asks educators to work in teams as part of a collaborative effort. Collaboration requires both active listening and receptive talking. It values both diverse perspectives and shared understanding. While some educators have extensive experience in collaborative settings, others may find that the Guidebook introduces them to new skills and processes.

The inquiry process is fostered by disciplined curiosity and guided questions. It is less formal than research methodology, but more systematic than personal opinions or impressions. Those educators who engage in an inquiry process can become more reflective and critical of their own—and their school's—practices. Using the wealth of informational resources and **best practices** on The Knowledge Loom, collaborative groups are able to further their capacity for inquiry and therefore further their chances of learning together as part of a team process.

As researcher Ann Lieberman has noted, "cultures of colleagueship, continuous inquiry, and collaborative work...may well mark the organizational path to the schools of the future." Beginning with Step 1, this Guidebook will help your team identify what is important and promote discussions that move the team toward working solutions.

"Our group was taken with the idea that we could actually begin to conduct inquiries into our own teaching. We have so often felt pulled in one direction or another by the swing of the educational pendulum ... [But now], we would be working as a community of learners."

ESL Teacher, Lowell, MA

Focus Themes and School Improvement Goals

Which issues most concern the stakeholders in your district? What are the education practices that you consider most important when developing school improvement plans? Has your school or district produced a mandate for improvement related to curriculum, student populations, or methodologies? Any of these could be identified as **focus themes** for your district, and it is important to take time to consider these themes and how they relate to **school improvement goals**. School improvement goals are the end result people are hoping for when getting engaged in change efforts. They are the expectations and explicitly stated intentions of improvement efforts.

Often listed as 'number one' among these goals is increased student performance. Other goals usually support this primary one. For example, improving the quantity and quality of professional development and connecting professional development to student improvement are goals that many schools set, believing that if they achieve these, they will have taken an important step toward increasing results on student performance measures. Other school improvement goals are to increase family or community involvement in academic activities and to develop systematic data-driven decision-making processes.

To support school improvement efforts, The Knowledge Loom Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org) is structured as a series of theme-based **spotlights** that contain rich collections of well-organized resources. Spotlights offer lists and explanations of best practices, related success stories, pointers to research, links to resources that can be found on other Web sites, and a set of interactive tools that prompt users to input knowledge of their own. In some cases, these interactive tools include a panel discussion with experts in the field. Spotlights provide the essential information and interaction needed to successfully identify best practices and develop strategies for implementing them in a school or district.

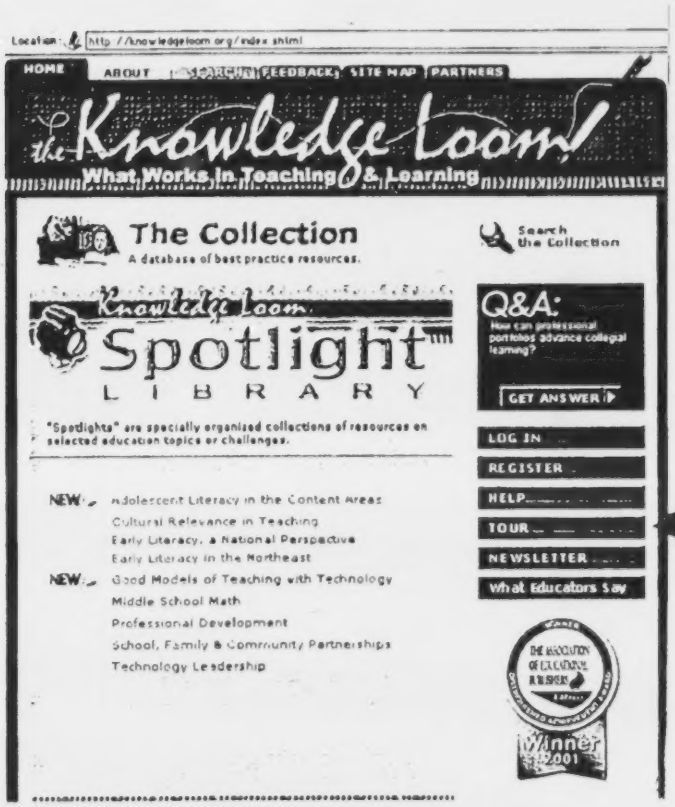
In Step 1, you will first identify a key focus theme for your improvement planning and match it to a Knowledge Loom spotlight. We recommend that you don't make that selection alone. In preparation, you will need to have gone through a process of identifying your school improvement needs by discussing and reviewing your site's **guiding documents** (comprehensive education/school reform plans, state and local mandates, student test scores, examples of student work, etc.). Identify a collaborative team at your site that can review and analyze this data and, together, discuss key improvement needs. In this way, you will be engaged in a collaborative process toward improved teaching and learning.

In cases where your focus theme matches a Knowledge Loom spotlight, using the Web site and Guidebook will help you articulate improvement goals and guide conversations, decisions, and planning that promote school improvement.

Loom Locations

In Step 1 you will use The Knowledge Loom home page and the **"Join Dialog"** interactive tool called "**Input Your Ideas**" related to your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

Note: If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capabilities during your collaborative inquiry sessions, you can print out the pages of these two locations and use paper copies to complete the activities.



Take The Knowledge Loom Tour.

To get better acquainted with what The Knowledge Loom offers, take the tour.

Click the "**TOUR**" button located on the home page (http://knowledgeloom.org).

Figure 1: The Knowledge Loom home page

Note the list of focus themes under the heading Spotlight Library.

You can do most of the work to complete this step without being on The Knowledge Loom. You will primarily be reflecting on your own school's or district's school improvement needs and goals. However, you will want to check The Knowledge Loom home page (Figure 1) before beginning. Since The Knowledge Loom is constantly adding new spotlights, take a look at the home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) to review the current Spotlight Library list, and add any new titles to the left-hand column on Activity Organizer 1.1.

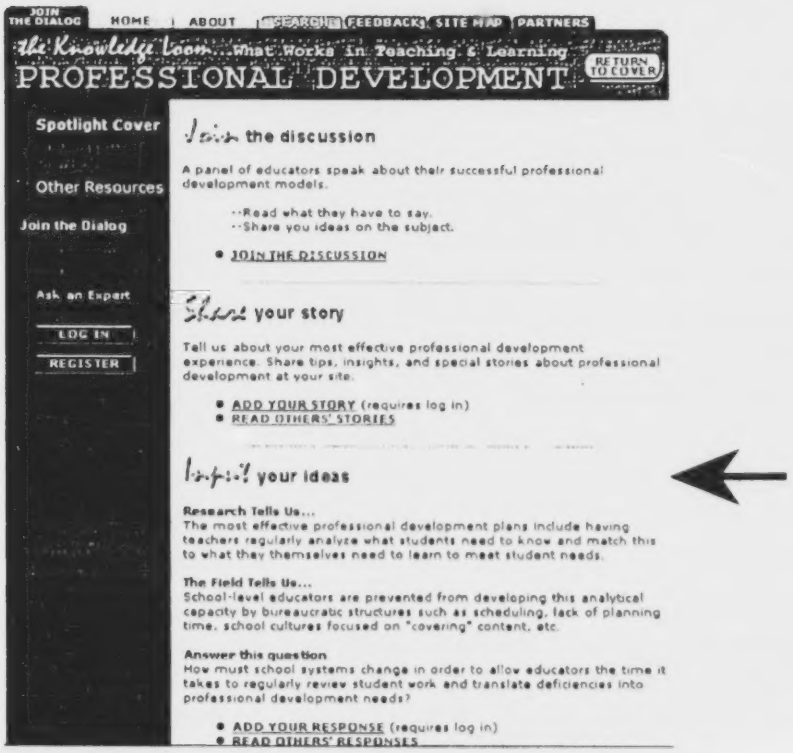

JOIN THE DIALOG
HOME
ABOUT
SEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
the Knowledge Loom...What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
Other Resources
Join the Dialog
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Join the discussion
A panel of educators speak about their successful professional development models.
··Read what they have to say.
··Share you ideas on the subject.
JOIN THE DISCUSSION
Share your story
Tell us about your most effective professional development experience. Share tips, insights, and special stories about professional development at your site.
ADD YOUR STORY (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' STORIES
Input your ideas
Research Tells Us...
The most effective professional development plans include having teachers regularly analyze what students need to know and match this to what they themselves need to learn to meet student needs.
The Field Tells Us...
School-level educators are prevented from developing this analytical capacity by bureaucratic structures such as scheduling, lack of planning time, school cultures focused on "covering" content, etc.
Answer this question
How must school systems change in order to allow educators the time it takes to regularly review student work and translate deficiencies into professional development needs?
ADD YOUR RESPONSE (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' RESPONSES

Figure 2: "Input Your Ideas" interactive tool from the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom

To locate the interactive tool called "**Input Your Ideas**" for your selected spotlight:

1 Click the spotlight title on The Knowledge Loom home page.

2 Click "**Join Dialog**" from the spotlight cover page.

3 Scroll down to "**Input Your Ideas.**"

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Step 1—Activity 1

Focus Themes and School Improvement Goals

GOAL

Identify school improvement goals using The Knowledge Loom spotlights to foster discussion, gather knowledge, and select a focus theme.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 1.1—Select a Focus Theme

Existing school/district guiding documents (comprehensive education/ school improvement plans; state and local curriculum mandates; student test scores; examples of student work, etc.)

Printout of The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org)

9

DURATION

$1^1/_2$ hours

Activity Organizer 1.1–Select a Focus Theme

When this organizer is complete, you will have:

- Pinpointed the focus themes that are most closely tied to your stated school improvement efforts,
- Identified a single spotlight with which to work on The Knowledge Loom, and
- Set school improvement goals upon which to focus your work.

List three key school improvement goals in the boxes across the top of the organizer. Put an asterisk next to focus themes most important to you (determine this by examining your guiding documents and discussing them with colleagues). Rate on a scale of 1 through 3 (3 being the most significant) the impact that each of the marked focus themes has on the three identified goals.

Focus Themes (Knowledge Loom Spotlights)	School Improvement Goals		
	Student Achievement	Teacher Satisfaction	Effective Leadership
Adolescent Literacy * in the Content Areas	3	3	2
Cultural Relevance in Teaching			
Early Literacy			
Middle School Mathematics			
Professional Development *	3	3	1
School, Family, Community Partnerships			
Teaching With Technology *	3	1	3
Technology Leadership			

Sample

Which of the focus themes scored the highest? This is the spotlight that you will use when completing other steps in The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Note it here:

Knowledge Loom Spotlight Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas

Now that you have identified a focus theme, list the improvement goals you selected to address as you explore this theme.

1. Increased student achievement in literacy
2. Teacher cooperation for literacy instruction in all content areas
3. Demonstrated support (time and resources) for literacy initiatives at leadership level

Directions: Step 1—Activity 1

1 Start by reviewing the focus themes that have been listed in the left-hand column on Activity Organizer 1.1. These represent spotlights on The Knowledge Loom. If there are additional spotlights presented on The Knowledge Loom home page, add these to your activity organizer.

2 Consider which of these focus themes already have the attention of stakeholders in your school or district by reviewing the guiding documents that exist at your school and having a discussion with a small group of colleagues about what they perceive to be the crucial issues. Mark two or three with an asterisk that gather the most attention.

Note: Several study groups might complete this exercise independently and then compare findings. In some cases an entire school will adopt one focus theme to pursue across grade levels and content areas. In other cases, it might be appropriate for different groups to adopt different themes. For example, in an elementary school, the first through third grade teachers might choose to focus on early literacy, while the fourth grade teachers might wish to focus on technology in the classroom.

3 Now identify school improvement goals that represent expectations for local improvement efforts, and write these into the heading row in the chart.

4 Use a rating scale of 1–3 (3 being a strong connection) to identify the level of impact each focus theme marked with an asterisk has on the three identified goals. By considering how each focus theme relates to your goals, you can identify those themes that will be most important to focus on for improvement. If there is a direct connection between the focus theme and the goal, record a rating of 3. If there is little or no connection, record a rating of 1. Use 2 for moderate connections.

5 Together, discuss and identify which of these themes seems to have the highest priority. Start by scoring each of the focus themes. Which are most connected to the goals you identified? In the space provided on Activity Organizer 1.1, record the one focus theme most connected to your identified goals. List your goals beneath it. You will use this information to guide all the other steps you complete in the Guidebook.

Step 1—Activity 2

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

GOAL

Broaden the conversation by connecting to The Knowledge Loom's online community, posting your thoughts, reading others' responses, and organizing study groups to further discuss input from your colleagues.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 1.2– Input Your Ideas

Activity Organizer 1.3—Learning From Colleagues

Printout of the "Input Your Ideas" question from your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight or online access to the question

Online access to The Knowledge Loom where you can input your thoughts and read the thoughts of your colleagues (See Loom Locations)

13

DURATION

30 minutes

Activity Organizer 1.2–Input Your Ideas

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Record your thoughts in response to the "Input Your Ideas" question on The Knowledge Loom.

sample

Activity Organizer 1.3–Learning From Colleagues

Extension: Reflection

Reflect on what colleagues had to say about the "Input Your Ideas" question in your selected spotlight on The Knowledge Loom. Are their ideas similar to yours? What is different? What is a surprise? What did you learn from their ideas?

sample

Directions: Step 1—Activity 2

1

Each spotlight theme on The Knowledge Loom features a key question, which is accessed by clicking "Join Dialog" from the selected spotlight cover page, and then clicking "Input Your Ideas" in the left-hand navigation area (or use the printout of the "Input Your Ideas" question). Take a few minutes to review the "Input Your Ideas" question for your selected spotlight. Jot down some notes to formulate your response on Activity Organizer 1.2 before posting.

2

Access the "Input Your Ideas" question for your selected spotlight online (see directions above). Click "Add Your Response" and enter your comments in the online form. You will need to register on The Knowledge Loom and/or log in to post a message.*

3

After you have posted your own response, click "Read Others' Responses" to compare your ideas with that of colleagues. Jot down some notes as directed on Activity Organizer 1.3.

15

Note: You may want to return to The Knowledge Loom several times over the next few days to check for additional postings from colleagues. If there are interesting points of diversion between your thinking and others, either seek them out individually to discuss, or organize a study group to compare ideas and find useful synergies that can affect your school improvement work.

4

If you have not already done so, consider taking The Knowledge Loom Tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at http://knowledgeloom.org.

* There is a "Register" and a "Log In" button on each Knowledge Loom page. Once you have registered, keep a record of your user name and password. The next time you use one of The Knowledge Loom's interactive tools, log in with this information. When you register, you are given the option to receive an occasional email message that will update you on new content added to The Knowledge Loom.

Notes for Facilitators

- Activity Organizer 1.1 is designed to help participants connect stated school improvement goals to The Knowledge Loom's spotlights. In order to do this, it is best to collect and review existing planning documents, state/district mandates, samples of student work, test scores, etc. and then match their contents with themes listed on the activity organizer. We are assuming that the school already has some planning data and is merely examining it to identify the most pressing priorities for school improvement. In schools where this is not the case, more in-depth time might need to be spent on collecting and analyzing data (student results, parent feedback, teacher surveys, etc.).

- Because there may be several matching themes between school improvement documents and Knowledge Loom contents, for best results, participants will need to discuss immediate priorities and focus on one theme and a limited number of goals related to that theme. In some cases, different groups might choose to focus on different themes. For example, in an elementary school, the first through third grade teachers might choose to focus on early literacy, while the fourth grade teachers might wish to focus on technology in the classroom. **Important:** In order to use the Guidebook, participants must identify at least one school or district focus theme for improvement that is also a Knowledge Loom spotlight.

- Note that the left-hand column on Activity Organizer 1.1 has some blank spaces. That is because The Knowledge Loom is continually adding new spotlights. Visit The Knowledge Loom's home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) to review a listing of current spotlights (under the heading Spotlight Library). Add new spotlight titles to the activity organizer as needed.

- If you have pre-determined which of The Knowledge Loom spotlight themes participants will be working with (for example, you may be doing professional development around technology, and you know participants will be using the Technology Leadership spotlight), you will need to alter the activity slightly. Participants still should discuss the importance of the selected theme as a priority and identify goals related to that theme.

- If you have access to a computer lab, consider having participants complete the extension activities while you are working with them face-to-face. "Input Your Ideas" is a valuable community-building activity. When participants post there, they are helping add to the knowledge base and participating in a learning community beyond the local setting. This is an important concept to promote.

- The "Input Your Ideas" extension activity provides participants with an opportunity to get their feet wet with The Knowledge Loom and understand its basic structure. Encourage them also to take The Knowledge Loom Tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers (click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at http://knowledgeloom.org). The tour can be taken by individuals, pairs, or as a large-group demonstration activity after Activity Organizer 1.1 has been completed.

Notes

Use this page to record how you used or modified the activities in this step.

Special Request: The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the facilitator's evaluation in Appendix C.

Step 1: Activity Organizers

Activity Organizer 1.1–Select a Focus Theme

Focus Themes (Knowledge Loom Spotlights)	**School Improvement Goals**		
Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas			
Cultural Relevance in Teaching			
Early Literacy			
Middle School Mathematics			
Professional Development			
School, Family, Community Partnerships			
Teaching with Technology			
Technology Leadership			

Which of the focus themes scored the highest? This is the spotlight that you will use when completing other steps in The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Note it here:

Knowledge Loom Spotlight _____

Now that you have identified a focus theme, list the improvement goals you selected to address as you explore this theme.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Activity Organizer 1.1–Select a Focus Theme

When this organizer is complete, you will have:

- Pinpointed the focus themes that are most closely tied to your stated school improvement efforts,
- Identified a single spotlight with which to work on The Knowledge Loom, and
- Set school improvement goals upon which to focus your work.

List three key school improvement goals in the boxes across the top of the organizer. Put an asterisk next to focus themes most important to you (determine this by examining your guiding documents and discussing them with colleagues). Rate on a scale of 1 through 3 (3 being the most significant) the impact that each of the marked focus themes has on the three identified goals.

Focus Themes (Knowledge Loom Spotlights)	**School Improvement Goals**		
	Student Achievement	*Teacher Satisfaction*	*Effective Leadership*
Adolescent Literacy * in the Content Areas	3	3	2
Cultural Relevance in Teaching			
Early Literacy			
Middle School Mathematics			
Professional Development *	3	3	1
School, Family, Community Partnerships			
Teaching With Technology *	3	1	3
Technology Leadership			

Which of the focus themes scored the highest? This is the spotlight that you will use when completing other steps in The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Note it here:

Knowledge Loom Spotlight *Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas*

Now that you have identified a focus theme, list the improvement goals you selected to address as you explore this theme.

1. *Increased student achievement in literacy*
2. *Teacher cooperation for literacy instruction in all content areas*
3. *Demonstrated support (time and resources) for literacy initiatives at leadership level*

Activity Organizer 1.2–Input Your Ideas

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Record your thoughts in response to the "Input Your Ideas" question on The Knowledge Loom.

23

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 1.3–Learning From Colleagues

Extension: Reflection

Reflect on what colleagues had to say about the "Input Your Ideas" question in your selected spotlight on The Knowledge Loom. Are their ideas similar to yours? What is different? What is a surprise? What did you learn from their ideas?

24

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Step 2: Review Best Practices

Concepts: Reviewing/Selecting Best Practices, Identifying Evidence, Planning Next Steps

Step 2: Review Best Practices

Concepts: Reviewing/Selecting Best Practices, Identifying Evidence, Planning Next Steps

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Best Practices and Evidence of Their Existence ____ 7

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- Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool
- Activity Organizer 2.2—Performance Measures and Next Steps
- Activity Organizer 2.3—Colleagues as Resources
- Activity Organizer 2.4—Connecting With Colleagues

Overview

In Step 1, you identified at least one **focus theme** for your school that corresponds to a **Knowledge Loom spotlight.** The question now is "What are the **best practices** that will play a key role in improvement related to that theme?"

In this step you will review lists of best practices presented on The Knowledge Loom and evaluate which of these practices is most critical in your school improvement efforts. In many cases, these practices are research-based and/or have shown proven results in actual schools or classrooms. Through a series of exercises, you will study and discuss the practices and begin to identify **performance/success measures** that will help you to know when you have successfully put them into action at your own site.

2

ACTIVITIES

You will review a list of proven best practices/programs, identify and evaluate current evidence of their existence in your organization, and make some decisions about selected practices that you will focus on for improved results. The Step 2 extension activity includes participation in your selected spotlight's Panel Discussion (some spotlights feature online panel discussions or dialog with an expert), as well as a reflection of personal learning and a commitment to an activity that supports continued personal growth. A participants' evaluation form is provided for your convenience in Appendix C.

DURATION

3 hours (can be conducted as two $1^1/_2$-hour sessions), plus time for the additional extension activity

PREPARATION

This overview and the section, Why Study Best Practices?, can be copied and distributed to introduce participants to important concepts and processes used in this step.

Note: Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

Why Study Best Practices?

By exploring **best practices** in use in other schools, and by thinking about these successful practices as **benchmarks** with identified **performance measures** (evidence of success), you are initiating a process of improvement in your own school, based on observable evidence, instead of preconceived notions. Sharing best practices may educate school leaders on new possibilities for support and action, improve teaching practices, accelerate continuous improvement, minimize re-inventing the wheel, and stimulate a whole school into action.

Benchmarking initiatives have led to major improvements in large corporations, and they have their place in government and not-for-profit agencies, as well. For example, the services and products of such United States federal agencies as the Census Bureau, Internal Revenue Service, the Postal Service, and the Department of Energy's Office of Environmental Management have improved dramatically through benchmarking processes. For your school, benchmarking may clarify a planning process, help you identify your weaknesses and discover your strengths, catalyze school improvement methods and processes, and foster and sustain a heightened capacity in the school to successfully implement high-quality improvement plans.

For the purpose of these activities, think of each best practice listed on The Knowledge Loom as a benchmark—a proven approach or method that can help schools/districts reach their improvement goals. And, think of performance measures (the actual activities that you can see in action) as evidence that the benchmark is being implemented. One example of a best practice, or benchmark, for professional development is "Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved." A performance/success measure for this practice could be that a team, representing a staff member from each grade level, systematically collects information about staff learning needs and meets regularly to prioritize and plan staff development activities.

Questions to ponder as you begin a benchmarking process are: What is the most effective way of sharing best practices in your school? What systems can be put into place that support educators hearing about a best practice, posing questions, discussing pros and cons, and agreeing on a course of action?

Benchmarks and Performance Measures

When you begin this process of looking at best practices for teaching and learning, and especially at how these practices are implemented in other organizations, you are engaging in a process that is called benchmarking. Large corporations benchmark for best practices by identifying other companies, often their competitors, who are excelling at reaching their goals in key areas. By identifying the best practices that are applicable to your own **school improvement goals**, identifying other schools/districts demonstrating success, and creating action plans for implementing these goals in your school or district, you are engaging in a benchmarking process.

The benchmarks are the targets you establish, and their attainment can be monitored by performance measures. You can identify what these performance measures are by asking yourself the questions "How will we know when we've accomplished our improvement goal?" or "What will we see when we've successfully implemented the best practice/ benchmark?" In this step, you will think about the performance measures you will use to track your progress toward implementing the best practices you have identified. These performance measures will serve as an important yardstick for your school improvement work.

4

"We asked ourselves, 'What do kids who are excellent readers and writers look like, and where are people doing the best job of teaching kids to read and write well?' And then we designed together the best way to make these things happen here, and the best way to get people here trained to be able to do these things."

Principal Mary Russo, Boston, MA

Loom Locations

In Step 2 you will use the best practices page and the "**Panel Discussion**" interactive tool (if your spotlight has one) for your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

Note: If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capabilities during your collaborative inquiry sessions, print out the pages of these locations and use paper copies to complete the activities.

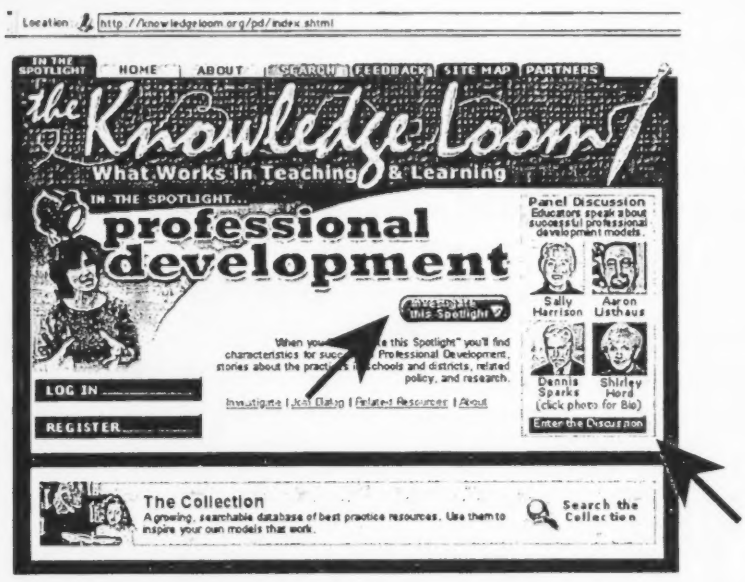

Figure 1: Professional Development Spotlight cover page.

Note the "**Enter the Discussion**" and "**Investigate this Spotlight**" buttons.

- You will use the "**Enter the Discussion**" or "**Participate**" button to access the Panel Discussion.
- You will use the "**Investigate this Spotlight**" or "**GO**" button to access the list of best practices for your spotlight theme.

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To find the Panel Discussion for your selected spotlight:

1 Click on the spotlight's title from the Spotlight Library on The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) to access your spotlight cover page.

2 Click the "**Enter the Discussion**" or "**Participate**" button to access the Panel Discussion.

PANEL DISCUSSION
HOME
ABOUT
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
the Knowledge Loom
What Works in Teaching & Learning
RETURN TO COVER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Spotlight Cover
Other Resources
Join the Dialog
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Join the Discussion
A panel of educators speak about their successful professional development models.
• Read what they have to say.
• Share your ideas on the subject.
Scroll down to see the discussion forum.
Meet our panelists
Sally Harrison
Aaron Listhaus
Shirley Hord
Dennis Sparks
(Click on photo for bio)
Audience and Panelist Discussion Forum
(read and write).
Add your thoughts here about what the panelists are saying.
Click to Show Replies
To post a message/log in
ID
Topic
Author
Posted on
1413 PD - on-going daily Cathy French 01-03-01 18:37
1199 Q3 How do unions influence staff development? Cathy Lalli 03-30-00 09:29
1194 training teachers Bill Laus 03-28-00 12:16
1184 Q4 How are challenges overcome? Cathy Lalli 03-24-00 09:05
1175 Teacher Evaluation Anita Murphy 03-20-00 15:32
1170 Q3 How do we know if it works? Cathy Lalli 03-19-00 10:09
1154 Q2 Where do data & staff development intersect? Cathy Lalli 03-12-00 19:26

Figure 2: Panel Discussion for the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom.

To find the list of best practices for your selected spotlight:

1 Click on the spotlight's title from the Spotlight Library on The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) to access your spotlight cover page.

2 Click "**Investigate this Spotlight**" or "**GO**" to access the list of best practices for your spotlight theme. See the "**What is it?**" link located below each listed practice.

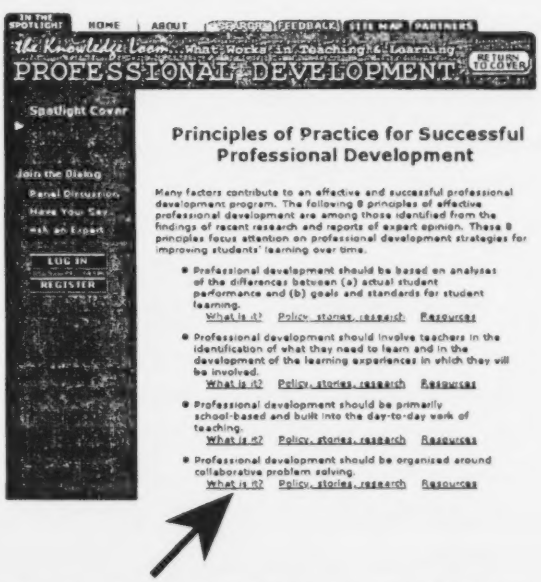

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
HOME
ABOUT
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
the Knowledge Loom
What Works in Teaching & Learning
RETURN TO COVER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Spotlight Cover
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Principles of Practice for Successful Professional Development
Many factors contribute to an effective and successful professional development program. The following 8 principles of effective professional development are among those identified from the findings of recent research and reports of expert opinion. These 8 principles focus attention on professional development strategies for improving students' learning over time.
• Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
• Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
• Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
• Professional development should be organized around collaborative problem solving.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources

Figure 3: Best practice page for the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom. Click the "What is it?" link.

Note: In some spotlights an index page will appear after clicking "**Investigate**" or "**GO**." In these cases, you will need to select a subcategory of best practices and click "**Learn More**" to see the best practices list.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Step 2—Activity 1

Best Practices and Evidence of Their Existence

GOAL

Identify which best practices are most critical to your school improvement efforts.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool

Access to The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) or printouts of pertinent online content (list of best practices for your selected spotlight and content of "What is it?" link for each practice on the list)

Chart paper

Markers

DURATION

$1^1/_2$ hours

RATIONALE

Before you begin this step, you will need to have identified an improvement goal and selected a Knowledge Loom spotlight that addresses that goal (Activity Organizer 1.1). Now, you will study and evaluate best practices that you think will play a key role in achieving your goal.

Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be familiar with the best practices listed for your chosen Knowledge Loom spotlight/focus theme,
- Know which of these practices are most critical to your own school improvement efforts, and
- Be able to determine specific performance measures that will help you evaluate progress toward implementation of the best practices/benchmarks.

Record the best practice in the left column. Rate the current level of that practice in your school. List specific evidence of that practice. Rate its priority to your school's improvement goals. (You will need multiple copies of this organizer.)

Selected Spotlight Title *Professional Development*

Effective Research-based Practices/Programs	**Current Level of Practice** Low 1 2 3 4 5 Moderate High	**Current Evidence of Practice** Describe the observable evidence for this practice at your site.	**Importance/ Priority** Low 1 2 3 4 5 Moderate High
Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.	(1) 2 3 4 5	*Only those grade levels requiring state testing meet annually after standardized test results are released to discuss performance gaps.*	1 2 3 4 (5)
Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.	2 (3) 4 5	*About 25% of instructional teams meet weekly to share instructional problems and strategies.* *Teachers regularly use instant electronic messaging to update each other on issues about students assigned in common.*	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.	1 (2) 3 4 5	*Outside presenters are brought in periodically to give workshops; follow-up is generally dependent on individuals.*	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.	(1) 2 3 4 5	*School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference.* *A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences.*	1 2 3 4 (5)

Directions: Step 2—Activity 1

1

To study and evaluate best practices that make sense in your school/organization, first work independently to review the list of best practices/programs listed in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight theme (see Loom Locations to locate the list online, or work from a printout of the list of best practices). Record the best practices on Activity Organizer 2.1 in the left-hand column.

2

Read more about each best practice by clicking on the "What is it?" link below each listed practice (or work from printouts of the "What is it?" explanations for each practice). After reading the first "What is it?" explanation, continue completing Activity Organizer 2.1 by:

a) Rating the current level of that best practice's presence in your school/organization

b) Listing specific evidence of the practice's presence (if any)

c) Rating its priority to your current school improvement goals/initiatives

Continue in the same way with each best practice in the list.

3

Once all practices in the list have been considered, divide into several small study groups. Compare ratings and evidence of practice from your activity organizers. On chart paper, record and tabulate these ratings and list all Current Evidence of Practice found at your site for each best practice. Engage in a conversation about your findings. What practices already exist? Who is engaging in them? What practices are important to us, but have no evidence of practice?

Note: This activity often uncovers pockets of best practice in your organization that can be shared (e.g., one teacher or one grade level/subject team engages in certain activities others are not aware of, or which are not evident in other places within the organization). Make note of these activities.

4

Based on the tabulations and discussion, each study group comes to consensus about which practices the school should focus on. Circle those practices on Activity Organizer 2.1. Create a chart that visually presents the best practices you have selected as priorities and the evidence of practice already apparent in your organization.

5

Prepare a five-minute presentation for the other groups, pointing out areas of strength (those practices that had much evidence of practice) and areas that need attention (high priority but low level of current practice). It might be interesting to list all practices rated as low priority and discuss if a change in thinking about these practices is needed.

6

Convene as a large group. After each study group makes its presentation, come to a consensus about which practices your organization will focus on as a whole for school improvement planning.

Note: These will not be all the practices you may want to attend to as an organization, but they represent a set of practices you can agree to address for a determined amount of time.

Step 2—Activity 2

Performance Measures and Benchmarks

GOALS

Identify performance measures to track progress toward achieving selected goals.

MATERIALS

Chart paper

Markers

Charts showing the list of tabulations and evidence for each practice from Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool

Activity Organizer 2.2—Performance Measures and Next Steps

Access to The Knowledge Loom or printouts of pertinent content ("What is it?" explanations, including Questions to Think About.)

Supply of red and green adhesive dots

Activity Organizer 2.3—Colleagues as Resources

DURATION

$1^1/_2$ hours

RATIONALE

Now that you have decided which best practices are most important to work toward, you have established a list of benchmarks. The next step is to identify the ways in which you will track your progress by agreeing on a list of performance measures for each benchmark.

Activity Organizer 2.2—Performance Measures and Next Steps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Identify current evidence of a best practice in action at your site,
- Identify additional performance measures (future evidence), and
- Begin to list next steps to accomplish your goals.

Complete a separate organizer for each selected best practice. First, list the best practice on the organizer. Then, in the left-hand column, list any current evidence of that practice in action in your school (this can be taken from Activity Organizer 2.1). In the middle column, list future evidence that you hope to see that will indicate when the practice is effectively and systemically implemented and working (performance measures/success measures). In the third column, outline steps you need to take to implement this practice.

3a

Best Practice/Benchmark: *Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.*

12

What are we doing now? (Current Evidence)	Performance Measure: What do we want to be doing? (Future Evidence)	What are our next steps?
School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference. *A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences*	*Have teachers select the professional development topics of most interest and organize internal trainings.* *Develop training cohorts with the school that can plan and lead trainings based on local needs and expertise.* *Provide stipends or incentives for in-house trainers.* *Staff development done in a new way—not just planned workshops.*	*Create a task force that represents grade levels/departments. Task force interviews teachers about topics of interest for professional development.* *Ask principal to investigate local/state funds to support stipends.* *Investigate scheduling options so that instructional or departmental teams can meet regularly to learn from one another.* *Encourage teachers to sit in on a colleague's class. Post one tip we learned on school's electronic bulletin board.*

3b

3c

5

SAMPLE

Directions: Step 2—Activity 2

1 Create study groups, one for each of the practices selected on Activity Organizer 2.1.

2 Click the "What is it?" link under your group's assigned practice (or work from a printout of that practice's "What is it?" explanation). Spend about 20 minutes discussing the Questions to Think About, which are listed under the "What is it?" information. Have one group member keep a running list on chart paper of important points made during the discussion. The Questions to Think About pose important issues that need to be addressed before an organization can successfully put that practice into action, and the recorded points might be helpful in identifying existing barriers and resources.

3 Using Activity Organizer 2.2, work together to create a list of performance measures for the practice that you can focus on as an organization.

a) First, list the best practice/benchmark at the top of the organizer.

b) Draw ideas from the evidence of practice listed on the chart paper from Step 2—Activity 1 indicating what is already happening at your site. List these under Current Evidence. (Important: Pick only those activities that you think are worth continuing and actually support improved teaching and learning.)

c) Then, brainstorm additional performance measures that you feel would show strong evidence of progress toward accomplishing the best practice/benchmark. List these as Future Evidence.

Note: If a few people in your organization are already demonstrating a desired activity, discuss strategies to get more people within the organization to begin demonstrating that activity.

4 Using chart paper, create a large version of Activity Organizer 2.2—one for each best-practice study group. As study groups report their findings, record already-existing performance measures (what are we doing now) and suggested new performance measures (what do we want to be doing) on the charts. After all groups report, participants come to each chart and place a red dot with their last name on it next to each measure they already practice effectively, and a green dot with their last name on it

next to the measures they would like to adopt. This way, at a glance, participants can see clusters of strength and need. By putting names on the dots, you will be able to identify colleagues you can approach for help and colleagues to whom you can offer help (see #6 below).

5

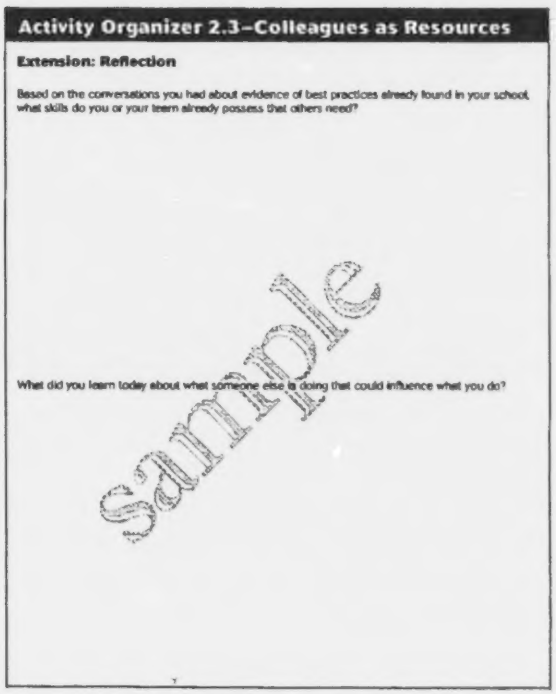
As a large group, brainstorm a list of concrete next steps for each practice (benchmark). List these in the right-hand column of each large chart.

For example, what barriers need to be overcome/how can you overcome them? What needs to change in the school/how can the change be made?

Note: The conversations you had about the Questions to Think About found on The Knowledge Loom will help with ideas for these next steps.

6

As a final activity, each person completes Activity Organizers 2.3 and 2.4. Based on the conversations in the study group and studying the placement of the dots on the large charts, individuals should reflect on what they already do or know that they can offer others and what they need to do or know that they can learn from others. Make notes as indicated on Activity Organizer 2.3. The last step is using Activity Organizer 2.4 to create a simple, yet concrete, action plan/commitment to learn from one another.



Activity Organizer 2.3–Colleagues as Resources

Extension: Reflection

Based on the conversations you had about evidence of best practices already found in your school, what skills do you or your team already possess that others need?

What did you learn today about what someone else is doing that could influence what you do?

sample

Activity Organizer 2.4–Connecting With Colleagues

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List three strategies for connecting with colleagues identified on the previous page to share what you know or to learn from them. Set a date for accomplishing the connections and a plan for putting new knowledge into action.

sample

Step 2—Activity 3

Extension: Contribute to a National Dialog

GOAL

Contribute to a national dialog related to your focus theme.

MATERIALS

Access to the "Panel Discussion" or "Featured Expert" for your selected spotlight on The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org)

DURATION

30 minutes

15

RATIONALE

Research tells us that professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.

Many of The Knowledge Loom spotlights feature a panel discussion or a single expert speaking on the topic. Panelists or the expert have responded to several important questions related to the theme of that spotlight. And, in many cases, colleagues have responded with their own experiences. There is much to be learned from these virtual conversations that can bring a broader perspective and fresh solutions to the topic at hand.

Directions: Step 2—Activity 3

1 Many of The Knowledge Loom spotlights feature a panel discussion or a single expert speaking on the topic. Go to the panel discussion by clicking on your spotlight title in the Spotlight Library on The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org). On the spotlight cover page, you'll see the panelists or expert pictured. Click on each picture to read a short biography and learn about the panelists.

2 Click on the link "Enter the Discussion" or "Participate," and scroll down to read the questions. "Click to Show Replies" will show the threaded responses under each question. If the spotlight features one expert, read that person's message. Spend about 20 minutes reading the messages that interest you most. You might want to jot down ideas that support the best practices and performance measures you identified during the first two parts of the Step 2 activities.

3 Now make a contribution to the discussion by responding to one or more of the questions, or by commenting on the single expert's thoughts. Your contribution is an important addition to knowledge that can be shared on this topic. You will need to register on The Knowledge Loom to post a message.*

Note: The panelists are no longer answering questions, so the response you post should be an observation or a thought-provoking comment about the subject.

* There is a "Register" and a "Log In" button on each Knowledge Loom page. Once you have registered, keep a record of your user name and password. The next time you use one of The Knowledge Loom's interactive tools, log in with this information. When you register, you are given the option to receive an occasional e-mail message that will update you on new content added to The Knowledge Loom.

Notes for Facilitators

- Spending a little extra time helping educators find their way to The Knowledge Loom features used for each activity helps people become comfortable with using technology to access school improvement resources. Once they feel comfortable, they are more apt to return to the Web site to explore content in various themes of individual interest. The Knowledge Loom Tour accessed from the home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) is a good place to start. If you haven't already used it, consider one session devoted just to getting acquainted with The Knowledge Loom, its features, and its navigation.

- Activity Organizer 2.1 is designed to get participants thinking about each of the best practices listed for the selected spotlight on The Knowledge Loom. Use the Questions to Think About in the "What is it?" section for each of the best practices to help participants better understand how these principles are related to local school improvement work.

- In Step 2—Activity 2 participants translate the best practices that they have identified into performance measures. When establishing performance measures, it is often helpful to set a few specific targets right away, as well as a method for tracking success. Identifying numbers and percentages as goals helps participants focus on a clear measure of success. However, you may want participants to avoid getting hung up on numbers before they are ready. They can always come back to these targets later in the process.

- When participants list, explain, and select performance measures that they wish to adopt, encourage them to examine each measure through the lens of how effectively it supports teaching and learning. Avoid measures that will not have direct impact on school improvement (e.g., if the best practice suggests involving parents, a performance measure of parents fundraising for the school is less desirable than a performance measure where parents are career mentors for a group of students).

- Devise a method for recording findings and decisions made during the Step 2 activities. Establish strategies for keeping these decisions working and vibrant—an active part of the school improvement plan. Avoid treating the activities as one-shot professional development encounters without impact on the ongoing work in the school/organization. The activities and activity organizers in Step 5 can help.

- Consider having participants complete the extension activities while you are working with them face-to-face. The spotlight Panel Discussion is one of several important community-building tools featured on The Knowledge Loom, and when your participants post to these areas, they are helping to grow that community.

Notes

Use this space to record how you used or modified the activities in this step.

Special Request: The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the facilitator's evaluation in Appendix C.

Step 2: Activity Organizers

Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool

Effective Research-based Practices/Programs	Current Level of Practice Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5	Current Evidence of Practice Describe the observable evidence for this practice at your site.	Importance/ Priority Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5

Activity Organizer 2.1—Best Practices Assessment Tool

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be familiar with the best practices listed for your chosen Knowledge Loom spotlight/focus theme,
- Know which of these practices are most critical to your own school improvement efforts, and
- Be able to determine specific performance measures that will help you evaluate progress toward implementation of the best practices/benchmarks.

Record the best practice in the left column. Rate the current level of that practice in your school. List specific evidence of that practice. Rate its priority to your school's improvement goals. (You will need multiple copies of this organizer.)

Selected Spotlight Title *Professional Development*

Effective Research-based Practices/Programs	Current Level of Practice Low 1 2 3 4 5 High	Current Evidence of Practice Describe the observable evidence for this practice at your site.	Importance/ Priority Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.	(1) 2 3 4 5	Only those grade levels requiring state testing meet annually after standardized test results are released to discuss performance gaps.	1 2 3 4 (5)
Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.	1 2 (3) 4 5	About 25% of instructional teams meet weekly to share instructional problems and strategies. Teachers regularly use instant electronic messaging to update each other on issues about students assigned in common.	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.	1 (2) 3 4 5	Outside presenters are brought in periodically to give workshops; follow-up is generally dependent on individuals.	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.	(1) 2 3 4 5	School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference. A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences.	1 2 3 4 (5)

Sample

Activity Organizer 2.2—Performance Measures and Next Steps

What are we doing now? (Current Evidence)	What do we want to be doing? (Future Evidence)	What are our next steps?

Activity Organizer 2.2—Performance Measures and Next Steps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Identify current evidence of a best practice in action at your site,
- Identify additional performance measures (future evidence), and
- Begin to list next steps to accomplish your goals.

Complete a separate organizer for each selected best practice. First, list the best practice on the organizer. Then, in the left-hand column, list any current evidence of that practice in action in your school (this can be taken from Activity Organizer 2.1). In the middle column, list future evidence that you hope to see that will indicate when the practice is effectively and systemically implemented and working (performance measures/success measures). In the third column, outline steps you need to take to implement this practice.

Best Practice/Benchmark: *Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.*

What are we doing now? (Current Evidence)	**Performance Measure: What do we want to be doing? (Future Evidence)**	**What are our next steps?**
School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference. *A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences*	*Have teachers select the professional development topics of most interest and organize internal trainings.* *Develop training cohorts with the school that can plan and lead trainings based on local needs and expertise.* *Provide stipends or incentives for in-house trainers.* *Staff development done in a new way—not just planned workshops.*	*Create a task force that represents grade levels/departments. Task force interviews teachers about topics of interest for professional development.* *Ask principal to investigate local/state funds to support stipends.* *Investigate scheduling options so that instructional or departmental teams can meet regularly to learn from one another.* *Encourage teachers to sit in on a colleague's class. Post one tip we learned on school's electronic bulletin board.*

SAMPLE

Activity Organizer 2.3–Colleagues as Resources

Extension: Reflection

Based on the conversations you had about evidence of best practices already found in your school, what skills do you or your team already possess that others need?

25

What did you learn today about what someone else is doing that could influence what you do?

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 2.4–Connecting With Colleagues

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List three strategies for connecting with colleagues identified on the previous page to share what you know or to learn from them. Set a date for accomplishing the connections and a plan for putting new knowledge into action.

26

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Step 3: Analyze Success Stories

Concepts: Finding Virtual Benchmarking Partners, Analyzing Cause and Effect Data, Identifying Performance Gaps

Step 3: Analyze Success Stories

Concepts: Finding Virtual Benchmarking Partners, Analyzing Cause and Effect Data, Identifying Performance Gaps

Overview ____ 2

Why Identify a Benchmarking Partner? ____ 3

Loom Locations ____ 5

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Analyzing Cause and Effect Data Found in Knowledge Loom Success Stories ____ 9

Step 3–Activity 2
Identifying Performance Gaps ____ 13

Step 3–Activity 3
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- Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors
- Activity Organizer 3.2–Identify Performance Gaps
- Activity Organizer 3.3–Share Success Stories
- Activity Organizer 3.4–Share Your Tip for School Improvement

Overview

How do you learn about schools that have implemented a best practice? This step will help you find schools enjoying the types of results you think are important. Through a series of exercises, you will review success stories and compare the sites where the stories take place with your own. You will be trying to identify cause and effect factors within each success story, and you will discuss and analyze the data that illustrates those causes. Think of these sites as your virtual benchmarking partners. Making comparisons will help you plan your own initiatives.

In Step 3, you will review **success stories** related to the **focus theme** (Knowledge Loom **spotlight**) you selected in Step 1. If you completed Step 2, you will have already identified **best practices** that you believe will make a difference in your school. Although you know something about the practices, you may not know how others like yourself have implemented them. Now you will explore stories linked to each of your selected practices. If you have not completed Step 2, then as you complete this step, you will want to select just one or two best practices from the list presented in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight to study further. As part of your **benchmarking** process with The Knowledge Loom, it is important to consider what factors and data lead to desired outcomes.

ACTIVITIES	You will listen to one principal comment on how best to use data from a successful benchmarking partner, and you will review several success stories, analyze the content of these stories, and discuss details with colleagues. Then you will compare what these schools are doing with your own work and begin to discuss action items for school improvement. During the Step 3 extension activity, you will use one of The Knowledge Loom's interactive tools to share a short story or tip about a successful practice at your own school. A participants' evaluation form is provided for your convenience in Appendix C.
DURATION	3 hours (can be conducted as two $1^1/_2$-hour sessions), plus time for the additional extension activity
PREPARATION	This overview and the section, Why Identify a Benchmarking Partner?, can be copied and distributed to introduce participants to important concepts and processes used in this step.
Note:	Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

Why Identify a Benchmarking Partner?

"Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It's the only thing."

Albert Schweitzer

When a big corporation benchmarks for **best practices**, it might seek out a **benchmarking** partner—a similar organization that is exceeding its goals in the same areas in which the corporation is interested in improving. The corporation will approach the organization and ask if it can conduct one or more site visits to gather information about the processes that are in place that help the organization reach its goals. Although site visits are often unrealistic for schools, given time and resource constraints, it is important to find case studies about schools, districts, and organizations that are working on improvement using the same practices you see as critical to your own success.

3

By offering **success stories**, The Knowledge Loom makes it easy for you to identify virtual benchmarking partners. And, the fact that the information is offered electronically in a single location allows you to study a variety of sites and have the benefit of what could be thought of as a composite benchmarking partner. Success stories on The Knowledge Loom are informal case studies of schools, districts, and organizations that are achieving improvement by implementing one or more of the best practices listed in each Knowledge Loom **spotlight**.

As part of your benchmarking process with The Knowledge Loom, it will be important for you to consider what factors led to the desired outcomes at each site. Too often, educators are presented with examples of successful practice but given little data or information about what driving forces were behind the success. The Knowledge Loom presents a wealth of information to help you take examples and turn them into action.

In order to determine the best benchmarking partner (Knowledge Loom success story/stories) to work with, you should examine closely the particulars of each selected story. It will be important that you are aware of the ways in which you and your partner are both similar and different. This may have an impact on whether you and your school/district will be able to implement the success story's practices or techniques in the same way, or if you will need to create alternative paths to the same goal. Success stories help to create images, establish what is possible, and define our realities and prospects.

Cause and Effect Data

A Knowledge Loom success story is a case study of real people in real contexts effecting real change. The point in selecting case studies is not just to learn about their success, but to learn about what might work for you. You most likely are interested not so much in what others have done, but in understanding how they did it. A Knowledge Loom success story can help you understand how people approached a task and what they did in order to complete it. You can begin to map their contexts and experiences with your own, all the time thinking about how you would do something given the resources that you have.

The success of a practice does not just happen magically. It is an effect of many and complex causes. These antecedents to success include specific structures of leadership; important details about the school or district environment; participation by administrators, staff, students, and the community; available funds; and more. Success happens when these precursors combine in particular ways and when a very specific series of events happen.

Data comes in many forms. As you read through a success story, you will want to look at data that are quantitative (e.g., student test scores) and qualitative (e.g., student and teacher anecdotes). The narrative portion of a story can be just as powerful as the numbers. In order to consider the whole story, you will want to consider information that seems anecdotal. Further, you will have to be thinking beyond the story about what things might not be said. Of course, you need to be very careful about what role your assumptions play as you record data, but even your assumptions provide an opportunity for digging deeply.

Performance Gaps (Making Comparisons to Your own Context)

As you examine cause and effect data, you will likely begin to see differences between the way your school or district is approaching a particular practice and the way the success-story group is approaching it. It is important to look at these differences closely and try to identify whether they have an impact on your ability to meet your school improvement goals. Your school improvement team may be doing something that the success-story group is not, or vice versa. Even if you are doing the same things, one group or the other is likely to be doing them to a greater or lesser extent (e.g., some teachers may be effectively demonstrating a certain practice, while others are just becoming aware of the practice). Some of these gaps in performance will be hurdles that must be jumped in order for you to reach your goals. Using Activity Organizer 3.2, you will compare your efforts to those of the success-story group, identify performance gaps, and make decisions about how these gaps affect your goals.

Loom Locations

In Step 3 you will use an audio file of Mary Russo, former principal of the Samuel Mason School in Massachusetts, links to success stories related to best practices you have selected to study, and the "**Join Dialog**" interactive tool called "**Share Your Story**" related to your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

Note: If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capabilities during your collaborative inquiry sessions, print the transcript of Mary Russo's statement, selected success stories (use the "**Print This Story**" option for each story), and the page displaying the "**Join Dialog**" interactive tool "**Share Your Story**." Use the paper copies for the activities.

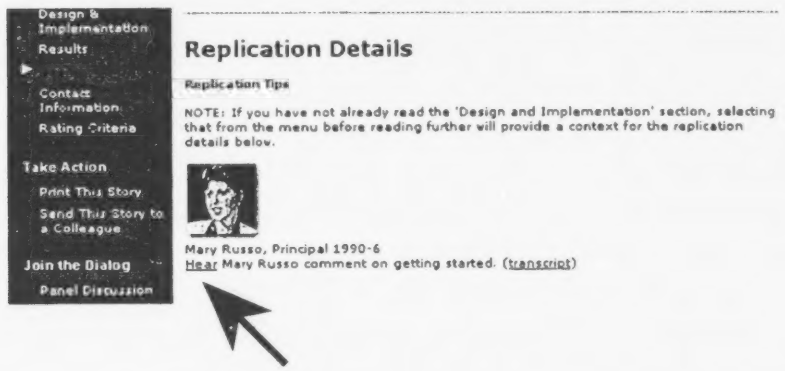

Design & Implementation
Results
Contact Information
Rating Criteria
Take Action
Print This Story
Send This Story to a Colleague
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Replication Details
Replication Tips
NOTE: If you have not already read the 'Design and Implementation' section, selecting that from the menu before reading further will provide a context for the replication details below.
Mary Russo, Principal 1990-6
Hear Mary Russo comment on getting started. (transcript)

Figure 1: One principal comments on how to best use data from a successful benchmarking partner.

To listen to the audio file of Principal Mary Russo talk about how best to use data from a success story:

1 Go to:

http://knowledgeloom.org/maryrusso/

2 Click the "**Hear**" Mary Russo audio file and "**transcript**" links.

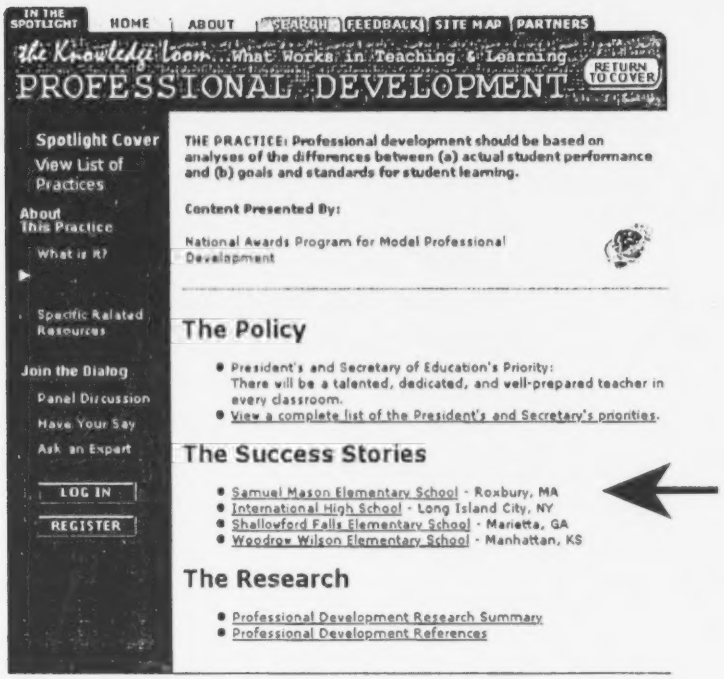

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
HOME
ABOUT
SEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
the Knowledge Loom
What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
View List of Practices
About This Practice
What is it?
Specific Related Resources
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
THE PRACTICE: Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
Content Presented By:
National Awards Program for Model Professional Development
The Policy
President's and Secretary of Education's Priority: There will be a talented, dedicated, and well-prepared teacher in every classroom.
View a complete list of the President's and Secretary's priorities.
The Success Stories
Samuel Mason Elementary School - Roxbury, MA
International High School - Long Island City, NY
Shallowford Falls Elementary School - Marietta, GA
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School - Manhattan, KS
The Research
Professional Development Research Summary
Professional Development References

Figure 2: Contents page presented when "Policy, Stories, Research" is selected from a list of best practices.

To find the success stories for a specific best practice:

1. Go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click the spotlight title you wish to explore. This will access the spotlight's cover page.
2. Select "**Investigate this Spotlight**" or "**GO**" from that spotlight's cover page.
3. Click the "**Policy, Stories, Research**" link immediately below the best practice(s) you wish to study. You will see a list of success stories listed by site name and location.
4. Click on the name of each site to view its story.

   Note: In some spotlights, an index page will appear after clicking "**Investigate**" or "**GO**." In these cases, you will need to select a subcategory of best practices and click "**Learn More**" before you see the "**Policy, Stories, Research**" links.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

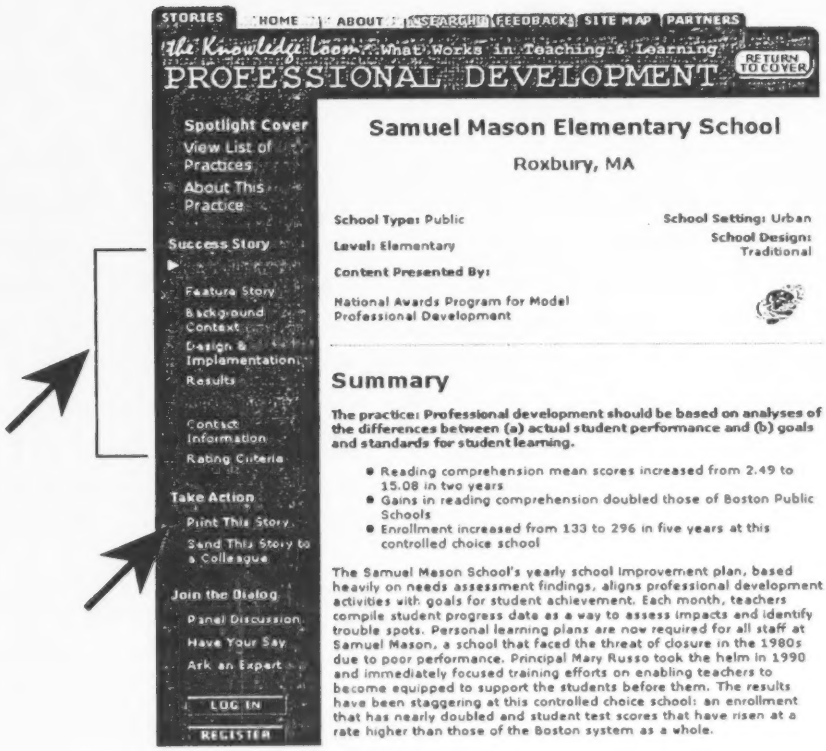

STORIES
HOME
ABOUT
SEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
View List of Practices
About This Practice
Success Story
Feature Story
Background Context
Design & Implementation
Results
Contact Information
Rating Criteria
Take Action
Print This Story
Send This Story to a Colleague
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Samuel Mason Elementary School
Roxbury, MA
School Type: Public
Level: Elementary
Content Presented By:
National Awards Program for Model Professional Development
School Setting: Urban
School Design: Traditional
Summary
The practice: Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
Reading comprehension mean scores increased from 2.49 to 15.08 in two years
Gains in reading comprehension doubled those of Boston Public Schools
Enrollment increased from 133 to 296 in five years at this controlled choice school
The Samuel Mason School's yearly school improvement plan, based heavily on needs assessment findings, aligns professional development activities with goals for student achievement. Each month, teachers compile student progress data as a way to assess impacts and identify trouble spots. Personal learning plans are now required for all staff at Samuel Mason, a school that faced the threat of closure in the 1980s due to poor performance. Principal Mary Russo took the helm in 1990 and immediately focused training efforts on enabling teachers to become equipped to support the students before them. The results have been staggering at this controlled choice school: an enrollment that has nearly doubled and student test scores that have risen at a rate higher than those of the Boston system as a whole.

Figure 3: Success story summary for one of the Professional Development spotlight practices.

From this screen, use the navigation bar on the left to explore the story in depth. Note that you can access information on demographics, design and implementation, contacts, context, and so forth.

Also, note the "**Print This Story**" button if you wish to print a paper copy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

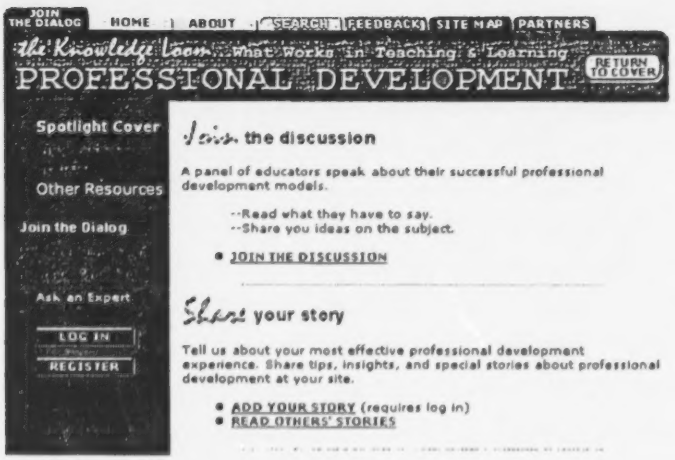


Figure 4: "Share Your Story" interactive tool from the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom.

To locate "**Share Your Story**" for your selected spotlight:

1. Go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click the spotlight title you wish to explore.
2. Click "**Join Dialog**" from the spotlight cover page.
3. Click or scroll down to "**Share Your Story.**"

Step 3–Activity 1

Analyzing Cause and Effect Data Found in Knowledge Loom Success Stories

GOAL

Analyze key success factors that lead to successful implementation of a best practice.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors

Activity Organizer 3.3–Share Success Stories

Access to The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) and/or printouts of pertinent online content (Mary Russo audio transcript, complete information for each story related to each best practice you want to investigate–use the "Print This Story" link)

Highlighters

Chart paper

Markers

DURATION

1 $^{1}/_{2}$ hours (If there are many stories being reviewed by each person, consider repeating this activity in more than one session.)

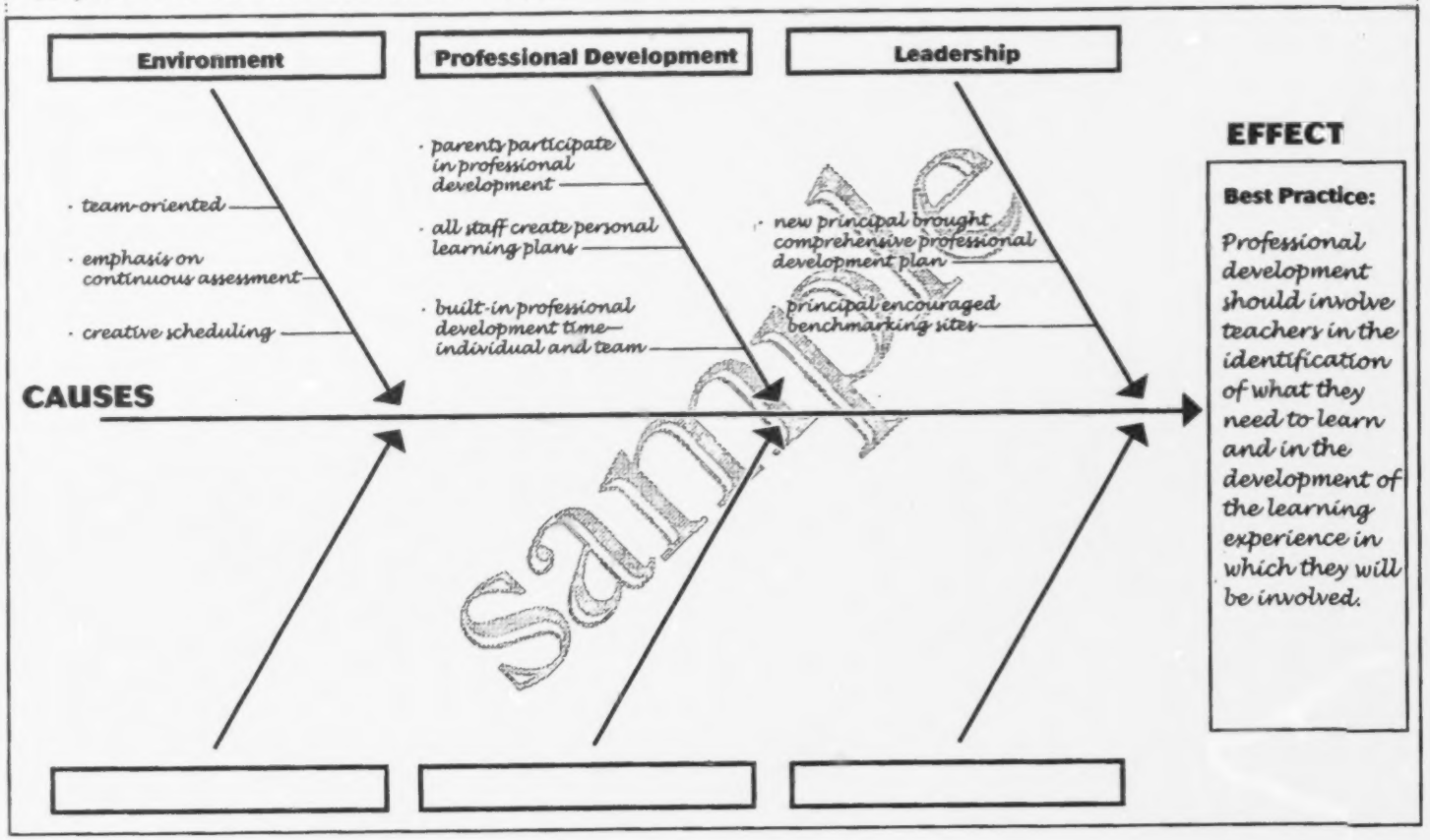
RATIONALE

Sometimes we believe that in order to model our own school improvement on the success of others, we can only be inspired by a site similar to our own in demographics, location, resources, and so forth. Principal Mary Russo discovered that there were few poor inner-city schools like hers that were getting the literacy results she desired. So she visited other types of schools and extracted the essence of their work to create a plan for her own school. Her audio file explains this thinking in her own words.

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have analyzed the causes (success factors) that led to the implementation of a best practice at a selected site.

Select a story from The Knowledge Loom and fill in its name/location. Record the best practice it exemplifies in the EFFECT box. Three categories are already listed on the organizer. Feel free to change them and/or add others. List key data in each category. Complete one worksheet for each selected site/story you wish to study.


Environment
Professional Development
Leadership
EFFECT
Best Practice:
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experience in which they will be involved.
· team-oriented
· emphasis on continuous assessment
· creative scheduling
· parents participate in professional development
· all staff create personal learning plans
· built-in professional development time—individual and team
· new principal brought comprehensive professional development plan
· principal encouraged benchmarking sites
CAUSES
Sample

Selected Story Name Samuel Mason Elementary School

Location Roxbury, MA

Directions: Step 3—Activity 1

1. Go to The Knowledge Loom to listen to (or review the transcript of) what Mary Russo has to say about understanding cause and effect data and developing a way to recreate what works for your site. Keep her words in mind as you review stories about other schools that have had success related to your selected focus theme and best practices.

2. Organize small study groups that make sense for the way your school is organized. This might mean grouping by grade level, curricular area, or interest in the best practice(s) being explored. Sometimes it encourages an interesting perspective to form cross-grade and cross-curricular groups.

3. Some Knowledge Loom spotlights have only one success story for each best practice listed, while others offer several. First, find the success stories for the practice(s) that you have chosen to study (see Loom Locations for details). If there are many practices you wish to study or several stories listed for each practice, consider assigning specific practices or specific stories to pairs of colleagues or separate study groups. If there is only one story, consider individually reviewing the story and comparing notes.

11

4. Once you have selected stories, read through each section of the success story and note each detail that may have played a role in both the group's challenges and success. You are looking for cause and effect data. You may find it helpful to work from a printout of each story and highlight these items. In addition to the story summary and feature story, many stories contain specific information about demographics, background, design and implementation, results, and replication details. These categories can be found in the left-hand navigation bar for each story.

5. Decide how to categorize the data that you have highlighted. You may choose to use the categories already printed on Activity Organizer 3.1 (Environment, Professional Development, Leadership) and/or add categories of your own. On Activity Organizer 3.1, record the title of the success story, the best practice it exemplifies, and the key data points into the appropriate categories. Along the lines of the chart, you might choose to

fill in bits of narrative that tie the data points together (see the Activity Organizer 3.1 sample). You may need to read between the lines or make certain assumptions to tie the data points together. Complete a fishbone chart (Activity Organizer 3.1) for each story you are assigned to study.

6 Once you have reviewed the selected/assigned stories, assemble one study group for each best practice being studied and report to each other your findings for each story that was reviewed. If each person studied the same story, compare your interpretations of cause and effect data for that story.

7 Discuss and come to agreement on details that you all feel are most essential to successfully implement the practice being studied. Remember that the metaphor of the loom supports the notion that you will be pulling bits of what works from various sites and considering how that can be put together to foster success at your own site, rather than necessarily replicating a school's program or system wholesale. Based on your discussions, make a list on chart paper of what your group agrees are the most important details originally noted on Activity Organizer 3.1. These notes and discussions will support the work you will do in Step 3—Activity 2.

8 Get other colleagues involved! If you are working on school improvement efforts, you are likely to be working with a team of others in your school or district. Use the "Send This Story to a Colleague" feature to get others involved in The Knowledge Loom. Let them know that you have found a school that is accomplishing great things by clicking on "Send This Story to a Colleague" in the left-hand navigation area of a story you are studying. You will be presented with a form on which you can fill in your colleague's e-mail address and add a special note where you can explain what you would like them to notice about this story. When you have finished filling in the form, click the "Send Story" button. If you are working offline when reviewing the stories, use the top of Activity Organizer 3.3 to record a list of colleagues to whom you would like to send selected stories.

Activity Organizer 3.3–Share Success Stories

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List colleagues to whom you want to send selected stories. (List name and location of story site next to name of colleague.)

Name	E-Mail	Story Site

sample

Note: To relocate the stories at a later time online, click the "Search" tab on any Knowledge Loom page. Type the name of the school in the key word box on the search form and click the "Submit" button.

Step 3—Activity 2
Identifying Performance Gaps

GOAL

Compare similarities and differences between a success story and your own site.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 3.2—Identify Performance Gaps

Highlighted printouts and notes on chart paper for each story investigated in Step 3—Activity 1

All completed copies of Activity Organizer 3.1

Bottom section of Activity Organizer 3.3—Share Success Stories

DURATION

$^1/_2$ hour (If there were many stories reviewed by each person, consider repeating this activity in more than one session.)

13

Activity Organizer 3.2–Identify Performance Gaps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be aware of performance gaps between your school improvement group and the success-story group, and
- Understand what the impact of these gaps is on reaching your goals and be ready to identify action items that help toward reaching your goals.

Under the Success Factors heading, list items from the completed copies of Activity Organizer 3.1 that you feel are most important to successfully implement the best practice being studied. Record the differences between these items (story's success factors) and your own site's practices (✓+, ✓-, ×). Reflect on what impact you believe this difference is having on reaching your school improvement goals.

Success Factors	Gap ✓+, ✓-, ×	Effect on Goals
Weekly meetings to study and apply strategies	×	*Strategies we present aren't sinking in because we don't allow time during the week.*
Analyzing student data	✓-	*We do this, but only once a year, after standardized tests—can't be ongoing and can't be embedded that way.*

sample

Directions: Step 3—Activity 2

1 In the conversations you had during the last activity, Step 3—Activity 1, you noted details that you felt contributed to the success of the sites you studied. These represent important similarities and differences between the success-story sites and your own. Review the highlighted story printouts, the data noted on Activity Organizer 3.1, and the notes you took on the chart paper. On Activity Organizer 3.2, in the left-hand column, record the most important similarities or differences you see between this data and the situation at your own site (do not exceed more than five or six items).

2 Now compare what they do to what you are doing. In the second column of Activity Organizer 3.2, place a check mark if the item is something that is happening at your own site, but to a greater or lesser degree. Use a plus or minus sign to indicate the performance gap, or place an X in the column if it does not occur at your site.

3 In the third column, jot your thoughts about the effect the performance gap is having on your school improvement efforts.

4

Consider making a connection with one of your virtual benchmarking partners! After you have spent some time analyzing a success story and studying performance gaps between what they do and what you do, you can take advantage of the contact information that The Knowledge Loom provides for most stories to learn more. If there are open issues for you about how to replicate certain initiatives, consider getting in touch with the people who have demonstrated success. Let them know about your analysis, tell them where you think the performance gaps are between their story and yours, and ask for their advice. To make this connection, click on "Contact Information" in the list of items under Success Story in the left-hand navigation. Use the space at the bottom of Activity Organizer 3.3 to make a list of items you would like to discuss with the success-story contact. (See sample below.)

Activity Organizer 3.3–Share Success Stories

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

16

List colleagues to whom you want to send selected stories. (List name and location of story site next to name of colleague.)

Name	E-Mail	Story Site

Note: To relocate the stories at a later time online, click the "Search" tab on any Knowledge Loom page. Type the name of the school in the keyword box on the search form and click the "Submit" button.

Items to discuss with the success story contacts:

4

sample

Step 3—Activity 3

Extension: Sharing Success Stories

GOAL

Add your own tips for success to The Knowledge Loom.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 3.4—Share Your Tip for School Improvement

Access to the "Share Your Story" interactive tool on The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) for your selected spotlight

DURATION

20 – 30 minutes

17

RATIONALE

A good way to broaden your **collaborative inquiry** experience is to share your thoughts with other members of The Knowledge Loom's online learning community. Every school involved in improvement efforts has a number of successful activities in which it already engages. In this step you will share those successes with others.

Activity Organizer 3.4–Share Your Tip for School Improvement

Extension: Reflection

Make notes about your tip or success story:

3

sample

18

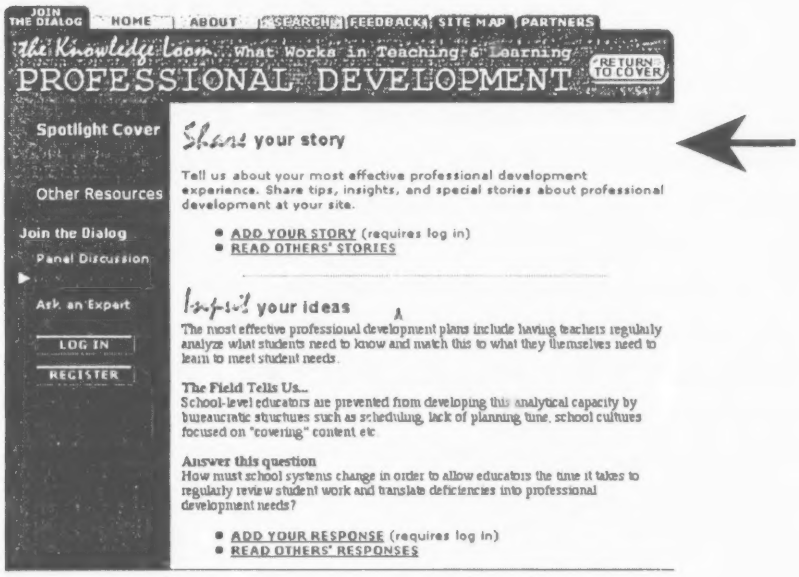
Directions: Step 3—Activity 3

1

Think about your selected focus theme and one of the best practices you are studying in this step. What does your school do particularly well in relation to that theme and best practice? What tip do you have for others about what works? Use Activity Organizer 3.4 to make notes about your tip or success story in preparation for posting to "Share Your Story" on The Knowledge Loom.

2

When you are able to get online, go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click on the title of your selected spotlight. From the cover page for your selected spotlight, click "Join Dialog" then scroll down to "Share Your Story."


JOIN THE DIALOG
HOME
ABOUT
SEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
Other Resources
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Share your story
Tell us about your most effective professional development experience. Share tips, insights, and special stories about professional development at your site.
ADD YOUR STORY (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' STORIES
Inspire your ideas
The most effective professional development plans include having teachers regularly analyze what students need to know and match this to what they themselves need to learn to meet student needs.
The Field Tells Us...
School-level educators are prevented from developing this analytical capacity by bureaucratic structures such as scheduling, lack of planning time, school cultures focused on "covering" content etc
Answer this question
How must school systems change in order to allow educators the time it takes to regularly review student work and translate deficiencies into professional development needs?
ADD YOUR RESPONSE (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' RESPONSES

3

First take a few minutes to read the responses others have posted to "Share Your Story." You might want to make notes if any of their tips seem like something you can use later. After you have read some of the other responses, click on "Add Your Story" and fill in the online form using the notes you made on Activity Organizer 3.4. You will need to register or log in on The Knowledge Loom to post a message.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

* There is a "Register" and a "Log In" button on each Knowledge Loom page. Once you have registered, keep a record of your user name and password. The next time you use one of The Knowledge Loom's interactive tools, log in with this information. When you register, you are given the option to receive an occasional e-mail message that will update you on new content added to The Knowledge Loom.

"Real stories of success, followed by research and references. Just the site I need! I am presenting a paper in July on best practices for technology in elementary reading classrooms. I have bookmarked The Knowledge Loom Web site!"

K–12 Educator

20

Notes for Facilitators

- Activity Organizer 3.1 is designed to help participants figure out what the driving forces are behind successful implementation of a best practice. Using the fishbone chart, participants can identify how evidence presented in each success story is related and which pieces of evidence are most critical to success. Remind participants that the data does not have to be numeric or quantitative. Any evidence gleaned from the success story can be used and is valuable.

- Point out to participants that they may need to make some assumptions about what happened in the success stories and why. It is okay to make assumptions as long as they are recognized as such. Participants might plan to check their assumptions by getting in touch with the success-story contact as part of the extension activity.

  Note: In some cases, schools do not wish to be contacted and have not provided their contact information. In other cases, leadership at the sites may have changed, and selected programs and practices may no longer be current. Sensitivity to these issues is important. Adapting or replicating the described practice/program often still has validity.

- The stories that participants select as benchmarking partners might seem ideal because they sound so much like the participants' own school or district. You can also encourage participants to select stories about places significantly different from their own to broaden their thinking about best practices. Help participants think out loud about which stories they are choosing and why.

- Activity Organizer 3.2 asks participants to extract from the stories the specific details that seem most critical in successfully implementing the best practice and to think about whether these same initiatives are being demonstrated in their own school or district. Identifying the performance gaps—differences in performance between the success-story site and a participant's own—helps to move goals forward. Depending on the selections participants make, you may want to think about ways to influence the addition of other essential details that they may have overlooked.

- Consider having participants complete the extension activities while you are working with them face-to-face. "Send This Story to a Colleague" and "Share Your Story" are important community-building tools featured on The Knowledge Loom, and when participants post to these areas, they are helping that community grow. Just finding their way to the features discussed in the extension activities provides participants an opportunity to get their feet wet with The Knowledge Loom and understand its basic structure. Being comfortable with the online environment encourages future use as needs arise.

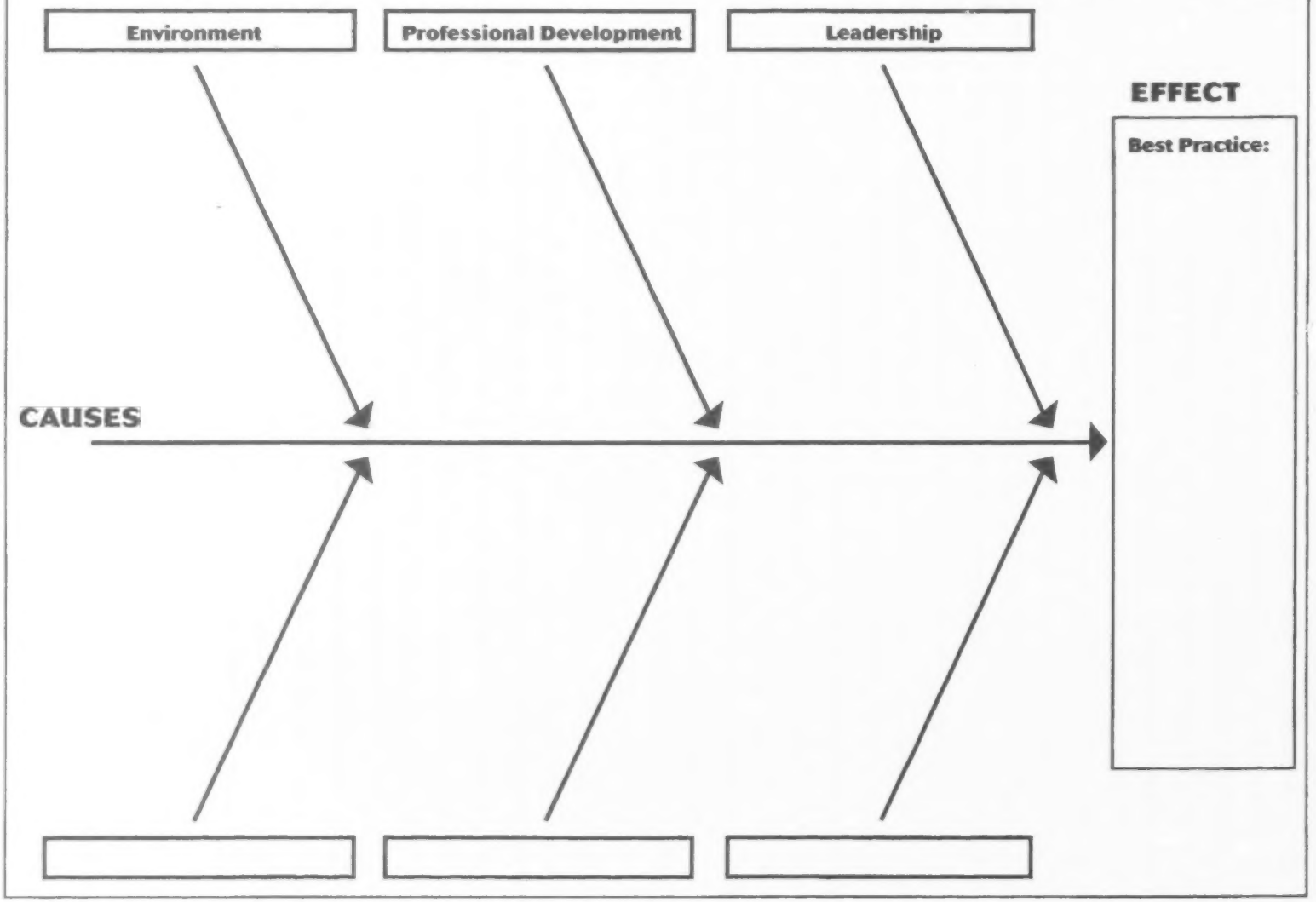
Notes

Use this space to record how you used or modified the activities in this step.

Special Request: The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the facilitator's evaluation in Appendix C.

Step 3: Activity Organizers

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors



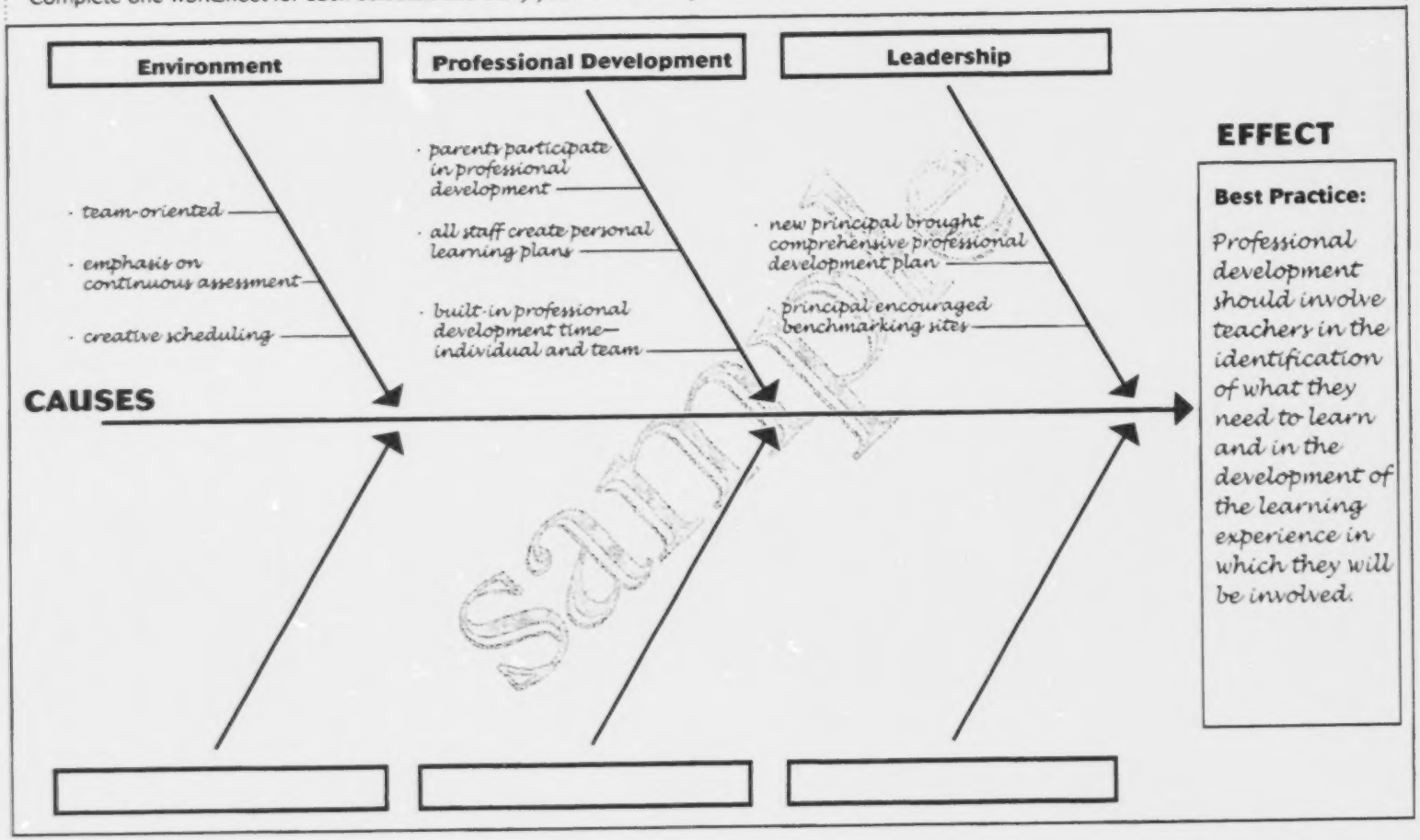
Selected Story Name _____

Location _____

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have analyzed the causes (success factors) that led to the implementation of a best practice at a selected site.

Select a story from The Knowledge Loom and fill in its name/location. Record the best practice it exemplifies in the EFFECT box. Three categories are already listed on the organizer. Feel free to change them and/or add others. List key data in each category. Complete one worksheet for each selected site/story you wish to study.


Environment
Professional Development
Leadership
· team-oriented
· emphasis on continuous assessment
· creative scheduling
· parents participate in professional development
· all staff create personal learning plans
· built-in professional development time—individual and team
· new principal brought comprehensive professional development plan
· principal encouraged benchmarking sites
CAUSES
EFFECT
Best Practice:
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experience in which they will be involved.
Sample

Selected Story Name Samuel Mason Elementary School

Location Roxbury, MA

Activity Organizer 3.2–Identify Performance Gaps

Success Factors	Gap ✓+, ✓-, X	Effect on Goals

Activity Organizer 3.2–Identify Performance Gaps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be aware of performance gaps between your school improvement group and the success-story group, and
- Understand what the impact of these gaps is on reaching your goals and be ready to identify action items that help toward reaching your goals.

Under the Success Factors heading, list items from the completed copies of Activity Organizer 3.1 that you feel are most important to successfully implement the best practice being studied. Record the differences between these items (story's success factors) and your own site's practices (✓+, ✓-, ×). Reflect on what impact you believe this difference is having on reaching your school improvement goals.

Success Factors	Gap ✓+, ✓-, ×	Effect on Goals
Weekly meetings to study and apply strategies	×	*Strategies we present aren't sinking in because we don't allow time during the week.*
Analyzing student data	✓-	*We do this, but only once a year, after standardized tests—can't be ongoing and can't be embedded that way*

Sample

Activity Organizer 3.3–Share Success Stories

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List colleagues to whom you want to send selected stories. (List name and location of story site next to name of colleague.)

Name	E-Mail	Story Site

29

Note: To relocate the stories at a later time online, click the "Search" tab on any Knowledge Loom page. Type the name of the school in the keyword box on the search form and click the "Submit" button.

Items to discuss with the success story contacts:

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 3.4—Share Your Tip for School Improvement

Extension: Reflection

Make notes about your tip or success story:

30

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Step 4: Identify Support Resources

Concepts: Broadening, Deepening, and Sharing Knowledge

Step 4: Identify Support Resources

Concepts: Broadening, Deepening, and Sharing Knowledge

Overview ____ 2

Why Review and Share Resources? ____ 3

Loom Locations ____ 5

Step 4–Activity 1
An Overview of the Research ____ 9

Step 4–Activity 2
Exploring Web Resources ____ 13

Step 4–Activity 3
Extension: Sharing Quality Resources ____ 17

Notes for Facilitators ____ 19

Activity Organizers ____ 21

- Activity Organizer 4.1–Reviewing the Research
- Activity Organizer 4.2–Reviewing Related Web Resources
- Activity Organizer 4.3–Discuss Research and Resources
- Activity Organizer 4.4–Supporting a National Learning Network

Overview

School improvement decisions need to be made carefully, and they need to be backed up with a variety of data that is grounded in research, based on proven methodologies, and connected to real-world examples. This step will help you identify important informational resources related to the **focus theme** and **best practices** you selected in Step 1.

During this step you will look at research summaries and research bibliographies that support each best practice you want to study. You will also explore other kinds of Web-based resources related to these practices. Some of the resources will further describe the best practices (white papers, reports, and studies). Others will help you put the practices into action (case studies, how-to brochures, tips and lessons, and connections to technical assistance organizations).

ACTIVITIES

First you will review research summaries related to selected best practices. Then you will explore links to other Web resources related to the selected best practices. You will be asked to reflect on their application to your school improvement efforts. Once you have analyzed a number of these resources, you will plan ways to share them with colleagues and members of your school community. During the Step 4 extension activity, you will use The Knowledge Loom's "Share Your Story" interactive tool to alert colleagues to a Web resource you discovered and that you think is particularly useful. A participants' evaluation form is provided for your convenience in Appendix C.

DURATION

3 hours (can be conducted as two $1^1/_2$-hour sessions), plus time for the additional extension activity

Note: The nature of this exercise is open-ended since many resources related to each focus theme and practice are presented on The Knowledge Loom. You may find that it will take two or three sessions before you are satisfied with the number and extent of the resources you wish to review.

PREPARATION

This overview and the section, Why Review and Share Resources?, can be copied and distributed to introduce participants to important concepts and processes used in this step.

Note: Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

Why Review and Share Resources?

The adoption and implementation of effective practices require continued learning both from the published literature as well as from colleagues and from the work of professional and technical assistance organizations. The examination and analysis of these resources have two benefits: first, they help to ensure that a range of views and perspectives—including those outside your school building/district—are included in your school improvement plans. Second, reflecting on these new ideas deepens knowledge in the school/district as a whole and helps practitioners to become inquisitive, reflective, and critical thinkers. Research tells us that an inquiry-driven reflexive culture in an organization contributes to continuous improvement because all ideas and practices in use are themselves naturally examined and re-examined in an effort to improve them.

Reviewing the Research

Many educators and education stakeholders want to see that school improvement decisions are being driven by careful, proven research in the field. However, research can sometimes be written in complex academic language and seem unapproachable to busy educators more interested in practical examples of what works. The Knowledge Loom provides very accessible summaries of academic research and reference bibliographies for each of the best practices presented. Take advantage of these summaries and bibliographies. Being able to articulate the research base for a selected best practice can help garner support for its acceptance among stakeholders and also can help influence funding and resource allocations at administrative, school board, and local community levels.

Accessing Resources Efficiently and Thoughtfully

Information about **best practices** based on the work of colleagues is invaluable. There is nothing better than knowing someone else tried it, and it worked. Thanks to technology, these colleagues can expand beyond the local area to colleagues in education worldwide. A wealth of resources like these exists on the Web and can help you build a strong vision for your school improvement activities. You have probably searched for some of these resources in the past and, at times, may have felt that there are too many of them to be truly useful. The Knowledge Loom has reviewed, evaluated, and selected some of the best of these Web sites and pages, and indexed them, saving you a lot of time and energy.

Think strategically about the Web resources you find that are related to your selected **focus theme** and best practices. We often spend a lot of time gathering information and data from the Web, but little time considering how it can be shared in conversations that turn the data and information into knowledge. As you explore each resource, ask "How can this support our school improvement efforts?" Questions like this provoke thoughts about how the information can actually be translated into action, as well as how it can be introduced into the local conversation about school improvement.

Remember that this Guidebook is predicated on the value of **collaborative inquiry**—educators talking together, sharing their insights, and asking questions together. Although information can be garnered through individual study, it is the process of negotiating meaning that propels us to deeper levels of understanding of content and concepts. Establish ongoing ways to share and discuss resources that can prove valuable to your school improvement efforts.

4

"In less than seven hours after I passed the URL of The Knowledge Loom Web site to our elementary school media center director, I received a response from her! She loved the site and is using it as part of staff development for an online project she is completing for credit."

Mary Van Dyke, Middle School Teacher, Atchison, KS

Loom Locations

In Step 4 you will use the research summaries and reference bibliographies, the "**Resources**" and "**Related Resources**" links, and the "**Share Your Story**" interactive tool for your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

Note: If you do not have access to a computer with Internet capabilities during your collaborative inquiry sessions, print the research summaries and reference bibliographies for each best practice you are studying. However, you will need to be online to explore the Web resource links and to share a resource using the "**Share Your Story**" interactive tool.

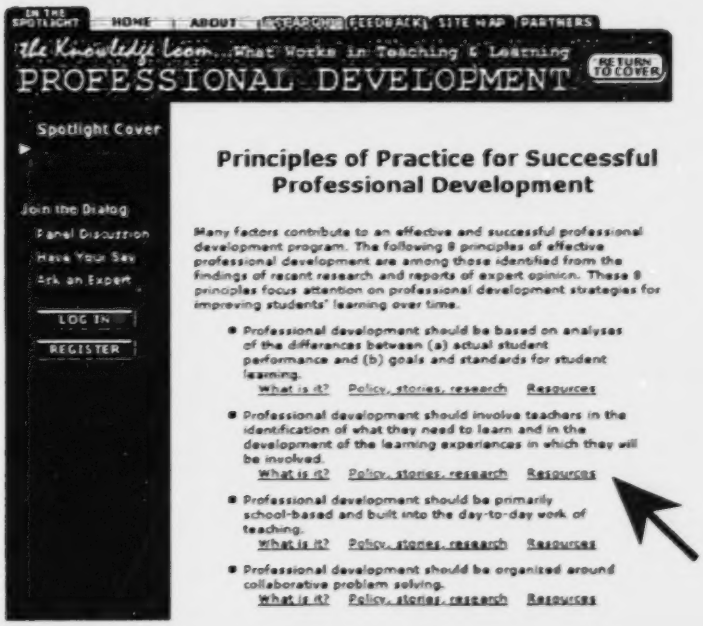

IN THE SPOTLIGHT
HOME
ABOUT
RESEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
the Knowledge Loom...What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Principles of Practice for Successful Professional Development
Many factors contribute to an effective and successful professional development program. The following 8 principles of effective professional development are among those identified from the findings of recent research and reports of expert opinion. These 8 principles focus attention on professional development strategies for improving students' learning over time.
Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources
Professional development should be organized around collaborative problem solving.
What is it? Policy, stories, research Resources

Figure 1: Best practice page for the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom.

To access the Web "**Resources**" link for each best practice:

1. Click on the spotlight's title from the Spotlight Library on The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) to access your spotlight cover page.
2. Click "**Investigate this Spotlight**" or "**GO**" to access the list of best practices for your spotlight theme.
3. Click the "**Resources**" link located below the best practice you are studying.

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After clicking on the "**Resources**" link immediately below the best practice(s) you wish to study, you will see a short list of very specific Web resources related to that practice.

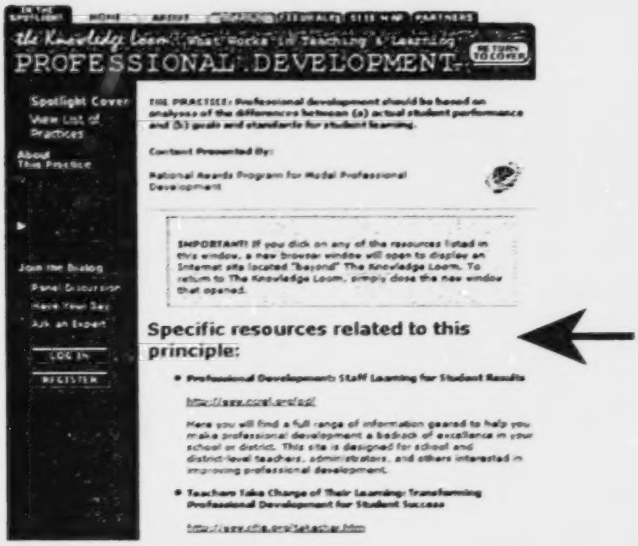

Figure 2: Sample resources page displayed when "Resources" is selected from below any best practice.

To view a more comprehensive list of Web resources, click the "**Related Resources**" link found on the cover page of your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

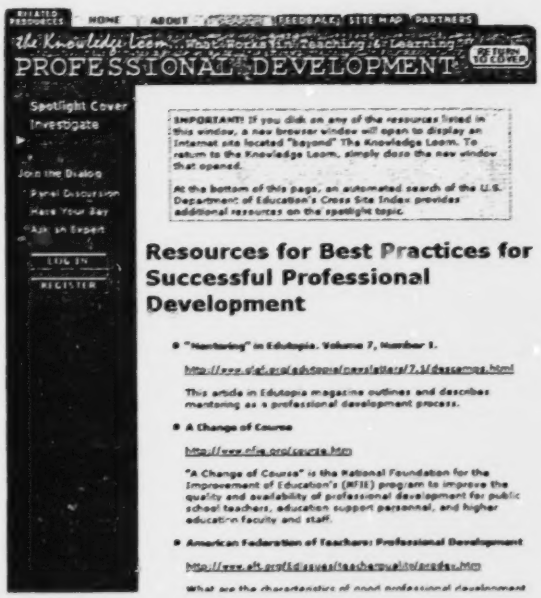

Figure 3: A more comprehensive list of Web resources displayed when "Related Resources" is selected from the spotlight cover page.

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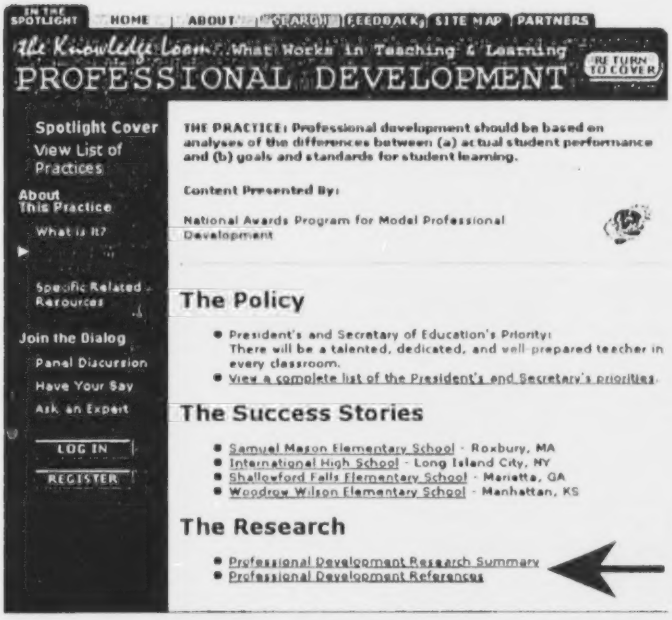
To find the research summaries or their reference bibliographies for a specific best practice:

1 Go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click the spotlight title you wish to explore.

2 Select "**Investigate this Spotlight**" or "**GO**" from that spotlight's cover page.

Note: In some spotlights an index page will appear after clicking "**Investigate**" or "**GO**." In these cases, you will need to select a subcategory of best practices and click "**Learn More**" before you see the "**Policy, Stories, Research**" links.

3 Click on the "**Policy, Stories, Research**" link immediately below the best practice(s) you wish to study. You will see the "**Research Summary**" and "**References**" links near the bottom of the page.


IN THE SPOTLIGHT
HOME
ABOUT
SEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
View List of Practices
About This Practice
What is it?
Specific Related Resources
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Have Your Say
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
THE PRACTICE: Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.
Content Presented By:
National Awards Program for Model Professional Development
The Policy
President's and Secretary of Education's Priority: There will be a talented, dedicated, and well-prepared teacher in every classroom.
View a complete list of the President's and Secretary's priorities.
The Success Stories
Samuel Mason Elementary School - Roxbury, MA
International High School - Long Island City, NY
Shallowford Falls Elementary School - Marietta, GA
Woodrow Wilson Elementary School - Manhattan, KS
The Research
Professional Development Research Summary
Professional Development References

Note the "Research Summary" and "References" links near the bottom.

Figure 4: Contents page presented when "Policy, Stories, Research" is selected from a list of best practices.

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To locate "**Share Your Story**" for your selected spotlight:

1 Click the spotlight title on The Knowledge Loom home page.

2 Click "**Join Dialog**" from the spotlight cover page.

3 Scroll down to "**Share Your Story**."

JOIN THE DIALOG
HOME
ABOUT
RESEARCH
FEEDBACK
SITE MAP
PARTNERS
The Knowledge Loom: What Works in Teaching & Learning
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
RETURN TO COVER
Spotlight Cover
Other Resources
Join the Dialog
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Join the discussion
A panel of educators speak about their successful professional development models.
--Read what they have to say.
--Share you ideas on the subject.
• JOIN THE DISCUSSION
Share your story
Tell us about your most effective professional development experience. Share tips, insights, and special stories about professional development at your site.
• ADD YOUR STORY (requires log in)
• READ OTHERS' STORIES

Figure 5: "Share Your Story" interactive tool from the Professional Development spotlight on The Knowledge Loom.

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Step 4–Activity 1
An Overview of the Research

GOAL

Become familiar with the research that supports the best practices listed in your selected spotlight.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 4.1—Reviewing the Research

Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources

Access to The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) or printouts of pertinent online content ("Research Summary" and research "References" for each best practice in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight)

9

DURATION

$1^1/_2$ hours

RATIONALE

Before you begin this step, you will need to have selected a Knowledge Loom spotlight (Activity Organizer 1.1). Now, you will study the research that supports the best practices listed in that spotlight.

Activity Organizer 4.1–Reviewing the Research

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be able to point to academic research that backs up the school improvement work you are doing, and
- Identify and select items that need further study.

Read the research summary for the best practice you are studying and take notes. Reflect on what this means to your school improvement goals/needs as you fill in the rest of the organizer. Items for further study can be selected from the reference bibliography. Complete a separate organizer for each best practice you are studying.

Practice: *Professional development should be based on analyses of the difference between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.*

2

Research Summary Notes	*These analyses point out the usefulness of alternative strategies for student learning and school improvement, paying close attention to the gains made by diverse types of learners.*

4

10

1) Important points to remember. 2) What needs further investigation?

We need to examine our school improvement goals and analyze individual student performance in relation to those goals. Find research that aligns school improvement goals with student achievement. Find research that helps us explore different strategies for student learning.

4

Research to Read	*"Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success"*

5

How can this support our school improvement efforts?

This report from the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) says that when teachers take control of their own professional development, student success increases. I think we can use this report to make the case that teachers analyzing student data should be at the center of our school improvement efforts.

6

Sample

Directions: Step 4—Activity 1

1. Organize small study groups that make sense for the way your school is organized. This might mean grouping by grade level, curricular area, or interest in the best practice(s) being explored. Sometimes it encourages an interesting perspective to form cross-grade and cross-curricular groups. Each group selects a best practice to study from the selected Knowledge Loom spotlight (see Loom Locations for details).

2. Select the "Policy, Stories, Research" link below the best practice assigned. List the practice on Activity Organizer 4.1.

3. Read the Research Summary for the assigned best practice either online or from your printout. Begin to complete the rest of Activity Organizer 4.1, and as you do, discuss each category with the group.

4. Most importantly, take time to reflect on what the content of this Research Summary means to your school improvement process. Ask questions such as "How can we use this information to change practice, lobby other stakeholders, educate our local community?" "What kinds of questions are we facing that the research might be able to answer?" On the activity organizer, record notes about the summary's contents and points to remember that seem pertinent to your school improvement efforts, and note issues that raise questions and seem to warrant further investigation.

5. If there is a point made in the summary that is of particular interest to your group, check its source by clicking on the "References" link on The Knowledge Loom. Record that citation on the activity organizer in the section, Research to Read.

6. Write reflections on how your reading supports your school improvement efforts.

7 Consider scheduling a book group with your study team and discuss the book or paper you selected from the research references. An excellent ongoing professional development activity is to organize a series of book groups for various study teams in the school. If colleagues are reading different, but related, literature, your organization will begin to build complimentary knowledge on the focus themes you have selected for school improvement.

8 Brainstorm other ideas for how this research information can be shared with colleagues and the broader education community in your city/town. Record these ideas on Activity Organizer 4.3.

Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List your plans for sharing research information and resource lists with colleagues and the community.

sample

Step 4–Activity 2
Exploring Web Resources

GOAL

Access online resources that inform and support your selected best practices.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 4.2—Reviewing Related Web Resources

Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources

Access to The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org)

A printout of the "Related Resources" list for your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight

Note: Work in the same study teams and on the same best practice as in the previous activity, Step 4—Activity 1. 13

DURATION

1 1/2 hours

Activity Organizer 4.2—Reviewing Related Web Resources

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have:

- Identified several Web resources that will support your school improvement activities, and
- Thought about ways these resources can directly help your work.

List the practice and Web resources that you are exploring. Evaluate how the resources can help your school improvement efforts.

Practice: *Not related to a particular practice. General resource for professional development best practices.*

Resource Title/URL:	*American Federation of Teachers: Professional Development* *http://www.aft.org/Edissues/teacherquality/prodev.htm*

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Lists the characteristics of good professional development programs. Exemplary programs are highlighted.

Could give us some ideas about who pays for various types of programs to help support new efforts we are trying to get off the ground offering teacher stipends. U.S. Department of Education sponsors a Model Professional Development Awards Program. We could review some of the winners and set as one of our goals to create a similar program, field test it for a year, and depending on results, consider applying.

Resource Title/URL:	

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Resource Title/URL:	

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Sample

Directions: Step 4—Activity 2

1 Select the "Resources" link below each practice you wish to study in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight (see Loom Locations for details). List the practice on Activity Organizer 4.2.

2 Some best practices will have many resources listed, others will have only a few or none at all. Begin by reviewing each of these resources. Record information about the resource on Activity Organizer 4.2—the title and URL, a brief summary, and notes. Most importantly, take time to reflect together on how this resource can support your school improvement efforts. Ask questions such as "How can we use this information to change practice, lobby other stakeholders, educate our local community?" "What kinds of questions are we facing that this resource might be able to answer?" Record your thoughts on the activity organizer.

3 After exploring the resources for your assigned practice, skim the printout of the "Related Resources" for your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight (see Loom Locations for details on how to access these links online). This is a general list of resources related to the focus theme of your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight. Decide how to divide up sections of the list, arranging it so different team members review different sets of resources. Because, in most cases, this list is quite long, each person should select up to five different resources to review independently. The printed annotations will help you make your selections.

15

4 Continue to complete the sections of Activity Organizer 4.2 for each resource you review. When the reviews are complete, plan a show-and-tell session with your study group. Each member should demonstrate for the others one or two of the best resources he/she discovered and, as these are being presented, continue the conversation about how each of these resources can support your school improvement efforts.

5

Brainstorm other ideas for how these resources can be shared with colleagues and the broader education community in your city/town. Record these ideas on Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources. These might include creating and sharing bookmark lists, creating a Web page with links organized in categories, and explaining the importance of each link to the school/district's improvement plans.

Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List your plans for sharing research information and resource lists with colleagues and the community.

sample

16

Step 4–Activity 3

Extension: Sharing Quality Resources

GOAL

Share your discoveries about Web resources with colleagues.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 4.4—Supporting a National Learning Network

Access to the "Share Your Story" interactive tool on The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org) for your selected spotlight

DURATION

20 – 30 minutes

17

RATIONALE

A good way to broaden your **collaborative inquiry** experience is to share resources with other members of The Knowledge Loom's online learning community. You may have already used the "Share Your Story" interactive tool on The Knowledge Loom in Step 3—Activity 3 to share a success story about your school. Now you will use the same tool to share a tip about a great Web resource you discovered.

Activity Organizer 4.4—Supporting a National Learning Network

Extension: Reflection

Record notes about helpful Web resources you discovered and that you plan to post with your comments to "Share Your Story" as a tip for others.

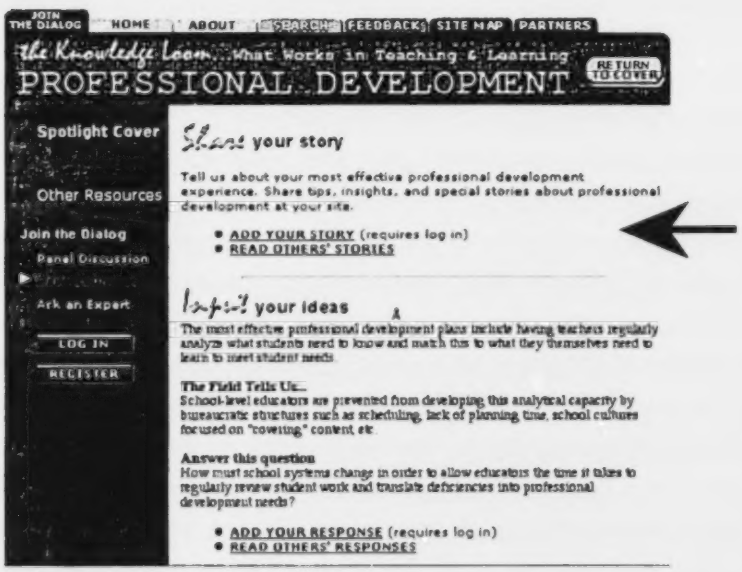
Resource	URL	Notes
1		

Sample

Directions: Step 4– Activity 3

1 Think about how one of the resources you reviewed in Step 4—Activity 2 can have a positive impact on achieving one of the best practices you are studying. Make notes on Activity Organizer 4.4. Include the title of the resource, the URL, a short summary, and how you think it can help improve teaching and learning.

2 When you are able to get online, go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click the title of your selected spotlight. From the cover page for your selected focus theme, click "Join Dialog" and scroll down to "Share Your Story." Click on "Add Your Story" and fill in the online form using the notes you made on Activity Organizer 4.4. You will need to register or log in to The Knowledge Loom to post a message.*


JOIN THE DIALOG
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the Knowledge Loom What Works in Teaching & Learning
RETURN TO COVER
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Spotlight Cover
Other Resources
Join the Dialog
Panel Discussion
Ask an Expert
LOG IN
REGISTER
Share your story
Tell us about your most effective professional development experience. Share tips, insights, and special stories about professional development at your site.
ADD YOUR STORY (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' STORIES
Input your ideas
The most effective professional development plans include having teachers regularly analyze what students need to know and match this to what they themselves need to learn to meet student needs.
The Field Tells Us...
School-level educators are prevented from developing this analytical capacity by bureaucratic structures such as scheduling, lack of planning time, school cultures focused on "covering" content, etc.
Answer this question
How must school systems change in order to allow educators the time it takes to regularly review student work and translate deficiencies into professional development needs?
ADD YOUR RESPONSE (requires log in)
READ OTHERS' RESPONSES

* There is a "Register" and a "Log In" button on each Knowledge Loom page. Once you have registered, keep a record of your user name and password. The next time you use one of The Knowledge Loom's interactive tools, log in with this information. When you register, you are given the option to receive an occasional email message that will update you on new content added to The Knowledge Loom.

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Notes for Facilitators

- Activity 2 of this step requires that participants go online to explore Web resources related to their selected focus themes and best practices. Spending a little extra time helping educators find their way to The Knowledge Loom features used for this activity is essential. In fact, it will generally help people become comfortable with using technology to access school improvement resources, and once they feel comfortable, they are more apt to return to the Web site to explore content in various themes of individual interest. The Knowledge Loom "TOUR" accessed from the home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) is a good place to start. If you have not already used it, consider one session devoted just to getting acquainted with The Knowledge Loom, its features, and its navigation.

- Ask participants to think strategically about how they can use the research summaries and Web links related to their selected focus theme and best practices. We often spend a lot of time gathering information and data from the Web, but little time considering how it can be shared in conversations that turn the data and information into knowledge. The activity organizers ask participants to consider "How can this support our school improvement efforts?" This provokes thoughts about how the information can actually be translated into action, as well as how it can be introduced into the local conversation around school improvement.

- Not everyone will be as interested in studying the research about a best practice (why we do it), compared with exploring the Web resources (often more related to how we do it). It is important to note that pointing out the research base for a selected best practice can help garner support for its acceptance among stakeholders and can help influence funding and resource allocations at administrative, school board, and local community levels.

- The completed activity organizers can provide two types of supports: a list of resources describing what participants want to achieve at the school/district, and frameworks and examples for getting there. In effect, these form the foundation for a school change policy. Because policymaking is involved, resources like these need to be discussed in the school community. Encourage participants to share the resources they discover with the broader community and to find ways to solicit and record views and feedback.

- Consider having participants complete the extension activities while you are working with them face-to-face. "Share Your Story" is an important community-building tool featured on The Knowledge Loom, and when participants post their own feedback and ideas, they are helping contribute to the growth of a broad and diverse teaching and learning community.

Notes

Use this page to record how you used or modified the activities in this step.

Special Request: The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the facilitator's evaluation in Appendix C.

Step 4: Activity Organizers

Activity Organizer 4.1–Reviewing the Research

Practice:	
Research Summary Notes	
1) Important points to remember. 2) What needs further investigation?	
Research to Read	
How can this support our school improvement efforts?	

Activity Organizer 4.1–Reviewing the Research

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be able to point to academic research that backs up the school improvement work you are doing, and
- Identify and select items that need further study.

Read the research summary for the best practice you are studying and take notes. Reflect on what this means to your school improvement goals/needs as you fill in the rest of the organizer. Items for further study can be selected from the reference bibliography. Complete a separate organizer for each best practice you are studying.

Practice:	*Professional development should be based on analyses of the difference between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.*
Research Summary Notes	*These analyses point out the usefulness of alternative strategies for student learning and school improvement, paying close attention to the gains made by diverse types of learners.*

1) Important points to remember. 2) What needs further investigation?

We need to examine our school improvement goals and analyze individual student performance in relation to those goals. Find research that aligns school improvement goals with student achievement. Find research that helps us explore different strategies for student learning.

Research to Read	*"Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success"*

How can this support our school improvement efforts?

This report from the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) says that when teachers take control of their own professional development, student success increases. I think we can use this report to make the case that teachers analyzing student data should be at the center of our school improvement efforts.

Sample

Activity Organizer 4.2–Reviewing Related Web Resources

Practice:	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	

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Activity Organizer 4.2—Reviewing Related Web Resources

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have:

- Identified several Web resources that will support your school improvement activities, and
- Thought about ways these resources can directly help your work.

List the practice and Web resources that you are exploring. Evaluate how the resources can help your school improvement efforts.

Practice:	*Not related to a particular practice. General resource for professional development best practices.*
Resource Title/URL:	*American Federation of Teachers: Professional Development http://www.aft.org/Edissues/teacherquality/prodev.htm*

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Lists the characteristics of good professional development programs. Exemplary programs are highlighted.

Could give us some ideas about who pays for various types of programs to help support new efforts we are trying to get off the ground offering teacher stipends. U.S. Department of Education sponsors a Model Professional Development Awards Program. We could review some of the winners and set as one of our goals to create a similar program, field test it for a year, and depending on results, consider applying.

Resource Title/URL:	

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Resource Title/URL:	

Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?

Sample

Activity Organizer 4.3—Discuss Research and Resources

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List your plans for sharing research information and resource lists with colleagues and the community.

29

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 4.4—Supporting a National Learning Network

Extension: Reflection

Record notes about helpful Web resources you discovered and that you plan to post with your comments to "Share Your Story" as a tip for others.

Resource	URL	Notes

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Step 5: Action Planning and Dissemination

Concepts: Articulating Long-Term Goals, Milestones, and Action Items; Sharing Your Success Story

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Step 5: Action Planning and Dissemination

Concepts: Articulating Long-Term Goals, Milestones, and Action Items; Sharing Your Success Story

Overview ____ 2

How Do I Move from Planning to Success? ____ 3

Loom Locations ____ 5

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- Activity Organizer 5.1—Create an Action Plan
- Activity Organizer 5.2—Our Organization's Success Story
- Activity Organizer 5.3—Disseminating Your Action Plan
- Activity Organizer 5.4—Personal Action Planning

Overview

People interested in improvement planning at any level—district, school, classroom—might find the Create an Action Plan activity organizer in this step helpful, but it is most valuable to those who have completed all the steps in the Guidebook. If you have completed Steps 1 through 4 of the Guidebook, you have a set of completed activity organizers that document the collegial discussions you have had analyzing **best practices**, how they look in action, and how you want them to look in your own organization.

In this step, you can refer to those activity organizers as you complete a concrete action plan for making your vision a reality. And as you move toward success, you are provided with a simple template to record your progress and develop a **success story** that can be shared on The Knowledge Loom as a learning tool for others.

Even if you have not completed the other steps in this Guidebook, consider using the activity organizers in this step to organize your thinking about improvement in your district, school, or classroom. And most important, use Activity Organizer 5.2 to create a success story about your own site and submit it for inclusion on The Knowledge Loom.

ACTIVITIES You will work as a team to create an action plan, using the activity organizers you completed in Steps 1 through 4 to guide the process, and you will establish a way to document your school improvement work—resulting in a success story that can be shared on The Knowledge Loom. During the Step 5 extension activity, you will review your organization's **school improvement goals** and **action items**, then think about committing to personal action items that will support the 'big picture.' A participants' evaluation form is provided for your convenience in Appendix C.

DURATION Open-ended (consider a series of short team sessions in which the plan is recorded and then presented to stakeholders). Recording the improvement process to create a success story is ongoing.

PREPARATION This overview and the section, How Do I Move From Planning to Success?, can be copied and distributed to introduce participants to important concepts and processes used in this step.

Note: Terms appearing in boldface text are defined in Appendix A: Glossary.

How Do I Move from Planning to Success?

"Benchmarking fails when it is seen as a solution, rather than the starting point."

Industry CEO

It is important to point out that this Guidebook is only a beginning. School improvement is an ongoing process and obviously does not end after a plan for one or two goals has been set. It requires taking action on your plan, systematically revisiting and monitoring results, and returning to resources like The Knowledge Loom for information and inspiration as new needs arise. These are important next steps in advancing school improvement.

If you have completed Steps 1 through 4 in this Guidebook, you have selected a **focus theme** for your work and studied research-based **best practices** related to this theme. You have examined best practices already in action at your own site, and you have analyzed what other schools, districts, and organizations are doing to achieve success. You have also reviewed the research behind the best practices, and have explored a variety of Web-based resources that further support your goals and interests for school improvement. You have done all this through a **collaborative inquiry** process, and as people think together, they define and evaluate assumptions and establish a collective understanding about where they are and where they want to go. Now that you and your colleagues are speaking the same language, you are ready to define and implement a plan for the achievement of your targeted **school improvement goals**.

Long-Term Goals, Short-Term Goals (Milestones), and Action Items

If you did not realize it before beginning your work with The Knowledge Loom, once you have completed several steps in the Guidebook, you will recognize that implementing best practices means much more than saying you are going to do it. Implementation, of course, is a process, and it does not happen overnight. The work that you and your school improvement team are doing will take months, perhaps a few years, to complete. In order to keep your eyes on the prize, it is important to articulate from the beginning what it is you are working toward—your **long-term goals**.

In order to reach the long-term goals, you will need to map out a series of **short-term goals** or **milestones**. These smaller goals will allow you to focus your energy on specific, doable tasks, while keeping the long-term goal in mind. Try to imagine the two or three major phases or big steps toward reaching each long-term goal, and make each of those a short-term goal or milestone.

Once you have identified the big steps to take toward your long-term goal, it is time to begin identifying **action items**—things you can do today, this week, or this month to reach the milestones. After your plan has been outlined, there is one more significant step—sharing with others.

Documenting and Sharing Your Success

The **benchmarking** process you engaged in as you used this Guidebook will be successful if you have:

- Established clear objectives driven by results,
- Included all key stakeholders in the process,
- Studied and accurately interpreted data, and
- Planned soundly and devised built-in mechanisms for evaluating your progress.

Others can benefit greatly from your eventual success, and it is important for you to feel a professional responsibility to tell your story of school improvement.

There is nothing like a good story to illustrate a point. A story ties an explanation of what to do with an example of how to do it. The Knowledge Loom Web site (http://knowledgeloom.org) links proven best practices to narratives about districts, schools, and classrooms where these practices have been put into action, to create a living textbook of what works and how it works. Now that you have embarked on a school improvement effort, we invite you to tell YOUR story on The Knowledge Loom and help colleagues learn from your success. Activity Organizer 5.2 will help you document your story and prepare it for submission to The Knowledge Loom.

Loom Locations

You will probably spend most of your time completing Step 5 away from The Knowledge Loom, concentrating on your own school improvement goals and referring back to your notes and completed activity organizers from Steps 1 through 4. However, revisiting details from the online success stories can provide you with ideas for how to set your long- and short-term goals and action items. Look especially at the **"Feature Story," "Design and Implementation,"** and **"Replication Details"** sections of each success story related to your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight.

To find the success stories for a specific best practice:

1. Go to The Knowledge Loom home page (http://knowledgeloom.org) and click the spotlight title you wish to explore.
2. Select **"Investigate this Spotlight"** or **"GO"** from that spotlight's cover page.
3. Click the **"Policy, Stories, Research"** link immediately below the best practice(s) you wish to study. You will see a list of success stories listed by site name and location.
4. Click on the name of each site to view its story.

   Note: In some spotlights an index page will appear after clicking **"Investigate"** or **"GO."** In these cases, you will need to select a subcategory of best practices and click **"Learn More"** before you see the **"Policy, Stories, Research"** links.

5

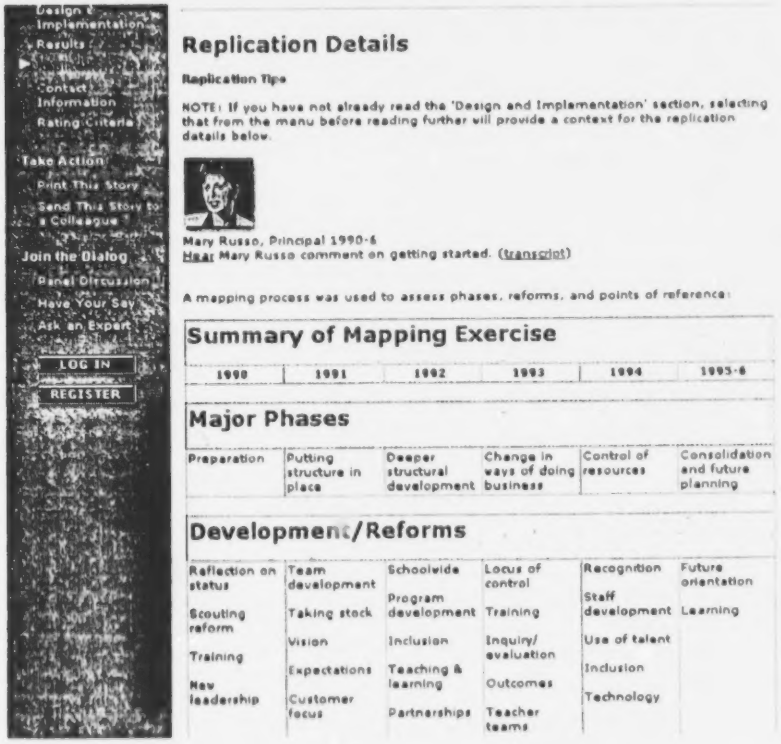

Figure 1: Example of use of a timeline in the "Replication Details" section of a success story.

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Step 5—Activity 1

Planning Goals, Milestones, and Action Items

GOAL

Create an action plan to realize your selected long-term improvement goals.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 5.1—Create an Action Plan

Activity organizers and notes completed during Steps 1 through 4 in this Guidebook (if available)

Activity Organizer 5.3—Disseminating Your Action Plan

DURATION

Open-ended

RATIONALE

An action plan is most effective when created by a team of strategically selected colleagues with a vested interest in the end results. Depending on the focus theme that has been selected for this plan, the team might be all the people in a curricular department, a cross-curricular school improvement team, or some other sort of representative grouping of colleagues and stakeholders.

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Activity Organizer 5.1–Create an Action Plan

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have a list of steps and actions to take toward reaching your long-term goals.

Begin by jotting your long-term goals in the first column. Discuss and define two or three big steps toward achieving each long-term goal; write these short-term goals in the middle column. Create your to-do list in the Action Items column.

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Goals or Milestones	Action Items
Get teachers involved in analyzing student data and using analyses as a basis for setting their own professional development plans.	Improve technology tools and procedures for collecting and sharing student data.	Talk to Director of Tech. Test new student info system. Find out about intranet.
	Restructure school schedule to allow for team data analysis meetings.	Talk to scheduling committee. Develop a prototype schedule. Investigate funds for release time.
	Establish submission and review procedure for professional development plans.	
Make collaborative problem-solving the basis of all professional development offered in the district.		

Sample

Directions: Step 5—Activity 1

1. Identify a team of strategically selected colleagues to identify improvement goals, milestones, and action items. Provide them with all the activity organizers and notes completed during Steps 1 through 4 in the Guidebook (if available) to guide their decisions about improvement planning.

2. Begin by identifying your long-term goals in the first column of Activity Organizer 5.1. Long-term goals can be those that you reach when you have implemented a number of best practices, or they can be the best practices themselves. In Step 2 of this Guidebook, you identified and studied a number of best practices related to your focus theme.

3. For each long-term goal, discuss and define two or three big steps toward achieving the long-term goal. Fill these into the second column as short-term goals or milestones.

4. In the last column, create your to-do list—those actions you can do today, this week, or this month toward reaching your milestones.

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5

Once the action plan is complete, brainstorm ideas for disseminating it to all stakeholders for implementation. List your thoughts about dissemination on Activity Organizer 5.3. Be sure each appropriate stakeholder is provided with a copy of the action plan. As you begin dissemination of the plan to various stakeholders and constituents, elicit their ideas for other ways to disseminate the plan, thoughts about possible stakeholder groups that may have been overlooked (teachers, administrators, parents, students, community members, local universities and businesses), and ideas for keeping communication lines open over time as the plan is implemented. Consider not only sharing the action plan, but also sharing copies of The Knowledge Loom success stories that influenced the plan's development.

Activity Organizer 5.3–Disseminating Your Action Plan

If you have been using the Guidebook prior to completing this activity, you know that a good way to engage with Knowledge Loom content is to share your thoughts and ideas about it with local colleagues, members of the broader education community, and members of The Knowledge Loom online community. Now that you have created an organizational action plan with long-term goals, milestones, and action items, list ways you can disseminate this plan, get feedback, and garner buy-in from all stakeholders.

10

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Action plan dissemination and ongoing communication ideas:

sample

Step 5—Activity 2

Documenting Your Organization's Success Story

GOAL

Document and then share your school improvement success story with a national network of educators.

MATERIALS

Activity Organizer 5.2—Our Organization's Success Story

DURATION

Open-ended and ongoing

11

RATIONALE

The Knowledge Loom offers stories about best practices in action. Where do these stories come from? They depend on people like you—districts, schools, and individual educators who are committed to educational excellence, who have found a way to achieve it, and who are willing to share with others about how they did it. Developing a success story to submit to The Knowledge Loom is a good way to track the completion of action items listed on your improvement plan and document the steps toward measurable results.

Activity Organizer 5.2 is provided as a template that will guide you over time as you record facts about your school and its path to success. Once the facts are recorded, you will use them to write a narrative about your success.

Activity Organizer 5.2—Our Organization's Success Story

When you complete this activity organizer, you will have:

- A record of where you started your improvement process and why,
- A record of the steps toward realizing your goals, and
- A record of results related to your efforts.

On separate paper, record information about each of the fields noted in bold on this template for documenting a Knowledge Loom success story. You will write lists of facts, followed by a narrative (The Facts and The Story). Record the facts over time. Write your story summary and narrative after all the facts have been recorded. E-mail your completed story (or questions about the development of your story) to loom@lab.brown.edu.

THE FACTS

These can be recorded as bulleted lists, charts, and graphs of progress over time (rather than in narrative form). They are intended to give you and readers an overview of your steps to success.

Selected Spotlight Title:
This relates to the focus theme of your improvement planning. Your story will be linked to this Knowledge Loom spotlight. **Note:** Some success stories might link to more than one spotlight, such as Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas and Professional Development.

Selected Best Practice(s):
Copy one or two of these from the list of best practices displayed in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight. These correlate with the benchmarks or long-term goals represented in your action plan and will be the focus of your work and your success story activities and results.

Best practice #1:

Best practice #2:

Name of School:
City, State:
Grade Levels:
Setting: (urban, suburban, rural)
Type: (public, private)

Demographics:
What is the size of your staff and student population? Are there other distinguishing characteristics such as free and reduced lunch, number transient population, etc.

Background and Context:
What is currently going on at your site th to integrate into your work? In a sense, t your long-term solution.

Design and Implementation:
How did you/will you implement the best copy of your action plan in this section is

---

Success story:

Samuel Mason Elementary School

Roxbury, MA

At the Samuel Mason Elementary School, situated in an old warehouse district in Boston, the students aren't the only ones learning more than ever before. From secretary to teacher to principal, every staff member here is required to formulate a personal development plan each September. Although all of the teachers by now have obtained dual certification in regular and special education, they are still expected to continuously identify what they don't yet know and to structure their learning accordingly. Summer and release-day time is set aside for school-wide work, and creative scheduling throughout the year enables grade-level teams and study groups to meet once a week during the normal school day to discuss upcoming efforts. Lead teachers in each subject area are available to assist others with incorporating new practices.

To view the rest of the story, go to The Knowledge Loom (http://knowledgeloom.org). Click the "Search" tab, find the key word box and input: "Samuel Mason Elementary School".

Directions: Step 5—Activity 2

1. Assign an individual, a pair, or a small team to operate as the historians of your improvement process.

2. Begin by having the historians record the following information listed on Activity Organizer 5.2: Selected Spotlight Title, Selected Best Practices, Name of School, City, State, Grade Levels, Setting, Type, Demographics, Background and Context, and Contact Information. They can also begin to list information in the Design and Implementation section, drawing from the completed action plan (as well as including a copy of the action plan itself). This section will be added to and adjusted as the improvement process progresses.

3. As the organization progresses through the action plan, the historians will keep records of action items completed, milestones achieved, qualitative and quantitative results, and adjustments made in the plan. The developing success story should be posted where all those involved in the work can readily access it—either online or in a binder in a central location.

4. It is important that others within the organization who are involved with the improvement work play a role in reporting progress that can be added to the developing success story. Encourage them to periodically check the story and comment on missing details. Consider establishing a periodic method of sharing individual progress and results that can be added to the story. The historians will add these details to the Design and Implementation, Replication Details, and Results sections of the template.

5. Once your organization feels that sufficient progress has been accomplished with your action plan, write a short summary and feature story about your success. E-mail the completed template and success story to loom@lab.brown.edu. Include your contact information, and we will get back to you about next steps for posting the story on The Knowledge Loom.

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Note: The Knowledge Loom also can accommodate other types of media in addition to text. We can discuss the possibilities of including documentation you might have available, including audio files of teachers or students talking about their work, video files of teachers in action, student work samples, slide presentations, etc. This type of media provides a powerful vision for others about how to create plans of their own based on your success.

6

When your story is posted on The Knowledge Loom, use it to advertise and celebrate your successful school improvement efforts!

Activity Organizer 5.2 continued

Results:
Over time, note things like changes in test scores and changes in student or faculty attitudes and practices. Record success measures (evidence) that your action plan is moving forward. You will want to note both qualitative and quantitative changes. Test scores are not the only measure of success. Anecdotes add story value and are good illustrations for others.

Replication Details:
As you work with your improvement plan, keep a running list of things you implemented, what worked, and what needed adjustment. Think of this as a journal that documents your path toward improvement. These notes will serve as tips for others who might try to adapt what you did to their own situations.

Contact Information:
Name, address, phone, e-mail of a person at your site who could talk to others about this success.

THE STORY
Once you have listed all the facts about your success, use this information to write a short summary and a feature story about your success. A helpful story-writing guide and story samples can be accessed online at http://www.lab.brown.edu/bpo/psguide/writingguide.html
Scroll to bottom of page and click on "Writing Guide Appendix E."

Short Summary:
A list of bullets (3-5 that clue the reader in to the main points about your story) and a 150-word overview that tells people the real turn-around story or the essence of your success model.

Feature Story:
A 500- to 750-word narrative that expands on the summary, reads like a magazine article feature, relates the story of your success, and will inspire others.

Step 5—Activity 3

Developing a Personal Action Plan

GOAL

Develop a personal action plan to support your team's action plan and long-term goals.

MATERIALS

Completed copy of Activity Organizer 5.1—Create an Action Plan

Activity Organizer 5.4—Personal Action Planning

DURATION

30 minutes

15

RATIONALE

An action plan usually outlines organizational milestones and action items, but waiting for others to make them happen, while continuing your status quo, day-to-day routines, does not accelerate successful change. Individuals and their deliberate commitment to change will support the successful implementation of the plan most efficiently.

Activity Organizer 5.4–Personal Action Planning

Extension: Reflection

Personal action items that support your organization's action plan:

2

sample

16

Directions: Step 5—Activity 3

1. Review the action plan recorded on Activity Organizer 5.1 and think about personal milestones and action items to which you can commit that will support the achievement of the action plan.

2. List these personal action items on Activity Organizer 5.4. These might be additional milestones and corresponding action items that correlate with organizational milestones stated on the plan, or they might be action items that lend personal support to each milestone already stated on the plan.

3. Consider selecting a trusted colleague with whom to share personal milestones and action items. Offer opinions, support, and clarifications to one another.

4. Each week, thoughtfully review the list you have created and make notes about your progress. We suggest that you get a notebook in which to date and record these weekly reflections, noting questions such as: "Have I actively incorporated my action items into this week's activities? What changes have I noticed in myself, my colleagues, my students? Are there other action items I should be attending to? How is our organization/team progressing as a whole? Are there conversations we need to have about our action plan?" It is very helpful to document progress and use it to both adjust old action items and plan new ones.

Notes for Facilitators

- Step 5—Activity 1 is designed to help participants create a list of things they can do today to begin, or continue, implementing best practices locally. The three levels of the activity organizer help them see how immediate to-do items can be tied to long-term goals. It is important to emphasize that long-term goals can be broken down into smaller, more manageable projects.

- Revisiting Knowledge Loom success stories can really help participants identify those actions that they should be taking. It is important, though, that participants understand that their path to school improvement is not going to look exactly like another school's or district's. Rather than just laying out a plan based on actions taken by the success-story group, participants should think carefully about local issues including time schedules, personnel, and other resources. Adaptations of another's success should be planned with these local particulars in mind.

- Sharing copies of The Knowledge Loom success stories that influenced the development of the action plan is an effective way to establish scenarios that can concretely define the improvement process and help set expectations for realistic results. Devising ways to share these success stories and discuss scenarios—what will it look like when it is working—can add an effective dimension to the school improvement process.

- Consider having participants complete the extension activity while you are working with them face-to-face. Sharing personal action items with colleagues can inspire new ways of thinking about the work and each other. It also provides an opportunity for establishing mentorships and support-relationships among colleagues.

- Strongly encourage participants to develop a plan for the ongoing documentation of their improvement work that will result in a success story that can be shared on The Knowledge Loom. The notion of collaborative inquiry, upon which this Guidebook is built, is not restricted to face-to-face interactions. Persuade educators to feel a responsibility, as professionals, for contributing to the knowledge base about what works in teaching and learning, and sharing this with colleagues worldwide. The Knowledge Loom provides an effective venue for this level of sharing. As a professional development facilitator, you can play an important role in helping to establish a new paradigm for collegial sharing that reaches beyond one classroom, one school, or one local community.

Notes

Use this page to record how you used or modified the activities in this step.

Special Request: The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the facilitator's evaluation in Appendix C.

Step 5: Activity Organizers

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Activity Organizer 5.1–Create an Action Plan

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Goals or Milestones	Action Items

Activity Organizer 5.1–Create an Action Plan

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have a list of steps and actions to take toward reaching your long-term goals.

Begin by jotting your long-term goals in the first column. Discuss and define two or three big steps toward achieving each long-term goal; write these short-term goals in the middle column. Create your to-do list in the Action Items column.

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Goals or Milestones	Action Items
Get teachers involved in analyzing student data and using analyses as a basis for setting their own professional development plans.	Improve technology tools and procedures for collecting and sharing student data.	Talk to Director of Tech. Test new student info system. Find out about intranet.
	Restructure school schedule to allow for team data analysis meetings.	Talk to scheduling committee. Develop a prototype schedule. Investigate funds for release time.
	Establish submission and review procedure for professional development plans.	
Make collaborative problem-solving the basis of all professional development offered in the district.		

Sample

Activity Organizer 5.2–Our Organization's Success Story

When you complete this activity organizer, you will have:

- A record of where you started your improvement process and why,
- A record of the steps toward realizing your goals, and
- A record of results related to your efforts.

On separate paper, record information about each of the fields noted in bold on this template for documenting a Knowledge Loom success story. You will write lists of facts, followed by a narrative (The Facts and The Story). Record the facts over time. Write your story summary and narrative after all the facts have been recorded. E-mail your completed story (or questions about the development of your story) to loom@lab.brown.edu.

THE FACTS

These can be recorded as bulleted lists, charts, and graphs of progress over time (rather than in narrative form). They are intended to give you and readers an overview of your steps to success.

Selected Spotlight Title:
This relates to the focus theme of your improvement planning. Your story will be linked to this Knowledge Loom spotlight. **Note:** Some success stories might link to more than one spotlight, such as Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas and Professional Development.

Selected Best Practice(s):
Copy one or two of these from the list of best practices displayed in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight. These correlate with the benchmarks or long-term goals represented in your action plan and will be the focus of your work and your success story activities and results.

Best practice #1:

Best practice #2:

Name of School:
City, State:
Grade Levels:
Setting: (urban, suburban, rural)
Type: (public, private)

Demographics:
What is the size of your staff and student population? Are there other distinguishing characteristics such as free and reduced lunch, number of native languages spoken, special-needs population, transient population, etc.

Background and Context:
What is currently going on at your site that prompted you to focus on the best practice(s) you chose to integrate into your work? In a sense, this is your problem statement. And, your action plan is your long-term solution.

Design and Implementation:
How did you/will you implement the best practice(s)? What systems will be put in place? Including a copy of your action plan in this section is helpful.

Activity Organizer 5.2 continued

Results:
Over time, note things like changes in test scores and changes in student or faculty attitudes and practices. Record success measures (evidence) that your action plan is moving forward. You will want to note both qualitative and quantitative changes. Test scores are not the only measure of success. Anecdotes add story value and are good illustrations for others.

Replication Details:
As you work with your improvement plan, keep a running list of things you implemented, what worked, and what needed adjustment. Think of this as a journal that documents your path toward improvement. These notes will serve as tips for others who might try to adapt what you did to their own situations.

Contact Information:
Name, address, phone, e-mail of a person at your site who could talk to others about this success.

THE STORY
Once you have listed all the facts about your success, use this information to write a short summary and a feature story about your success. A helpful story-writing guide and story samples can be accessed online at http://www.lab.brown.edu/bpo/psguide/writingguide.html
Scroll to bottom of page and click on "Writing Guide Appendix E."

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Short Summary:
A list of bullets (3-5 that clue the reader in to the main points about your story) and a 150-word overview that tells people the real turn-around story or the essence of your success model.

Feature Story:
A 500- to 750-word narrative that expands on the summary, reads like a magazine article feature, relates the story of your success, and will inspire others.

Activity Organizer 5.3—Disseminating Your Action Plan

If you have been using the Guidebook prior to completing this activity, you know that a good way to engage with Knowledge Loom content is to share your thoughts and ideas about it with local colleagues, members of the broader education community, and members of The Knowledge Loom online community. Now that you have created an organizational action plan with long-term goals, milestones, and action items, list ways you can disseminate this plan, get feedback, and garner buy-in from all stakeholders.

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Action plan dissemination and ongoing communication ideas:

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Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 5.4–Personal Action Planning

Extension: Reflection

Personal action items that support your organization's action plan:

28

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary
Appendix B: Reproducible Activity Organizers
Appendix C: Evaluation Forms
Appendix D: References

Appendix A
Glossary

action items

Concrete things you can do this week, this month, this year toward reaching your milestones and long-term goals for improvement.

benchmark

The proven approach or method that can help schools and districts reach their improvement goals. In the context of this workbook, the words benchmark and best practice are used interchangeably. The best practices or benchmarks listed on The Knowledge Loom in each spotlight are recognized for causing demonstrable success or positive results. Best practices for teaching and learning can range from broad methodologies to very focused teaching and learning strategies. Most of the best practices that appear on The Knowledge Loom are research-based and have been successful in one or more school settings. One example of a best practice, or benchmark, for professional development is: "Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved."

benchmarking

A process of looking at best practices (in this context, best practices for teaching and learning), and especially looking at how these practices are successfully implemented in other organizations.

best practices

The proven approaches or methods that can help schools and districts reach their improvement goals. In The Knowledge Loom, most of the practices listed are based on evidence and research (see benchmark).

collaborative inquiry

Process in which colleagues talk together, share insights, and ask questions to plan improvement efforts and strategies. In the context of schools, groups of educators, such as a school improvement team, come together to explore issues of teaching and learning.

focus theme

A recognized topic area around which to concentrate improvement efforts. For schools, a focus theme might be early literacy, adolescent literacy in the content areas, parent involvement that supports student achievement, and so forth. The content in The Knowledge Loom spotlights is organized around focus themes.

guiding documents/school planning documents

The written records that guide improvement efforts at schools. They can include comprehensive education/school improvement plans, state and local curriculum mandates, curriculum standards and frameworks, student test score data and comparisons, examples of student work, individual student learning plans, and so forth.

long-term goals (see school improvement goals)

milestones (see short-term goals)

performance indicator (performance measure/success measure)

The actual activity that you can see in action indicating that an identified benchmark, best practice, or desired way of operating is being implemented. Think of performance indicators as evidence. One example of a best practice, or benchmark, for professional development is "Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved." An example of a performance indicator or success measure for this best practice is that teachers are observed meeting annually by grade level to look at student work and test scores, evaluate weak points, and then recommend professional development activities that will strengthen the delivery of curriculum in these areas.

performance measure/success measure (see performance indicator)

school improvement goals

The end result people are hoping for when engaging in change efforts. School improvement goals are the expectations that everyone has for the end result—the explicitly stated intentions of improvement efforts. Sample improvement goals include increased student achievement in identified curriculum areas, systematized opportunities for job-embedded professional development, and increased participation of family and community members in academic initiatives. Sometimes these are referred to as long-term goals.

short-term goals

A series of progressive phases or big steps toward reaching a long-term goal. These can also be thought of as milestones.

spotlight (Knowledge Loom spotlight)

Collections of rich resources organized around a selected theme. Each Knowledge Loom spotlight contains lists and explanations of best practices, supporting success stories and research summaries, links to related resources that can be found on other Web sites, and a set of interactive tools that prompts users to input knowledge of their own.

success story

In the context of The Knowledge Loom, an informal case study that describes how a best practice is implemented at a given school, district, or organization. Many of the success stories on The Knowledge Loom include background information about the site, an explanation of how they put the practice into action, and reporting on various results attributed to the practice. In some cases, schools are just beginning to implement practices and report on anticipated results that are being tracked, based on promising observations of individual student achievement, shifts in attitudes, and so forth. In other cases, the practices are well-established, and the stories offer both quantitative and qualitative data.

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Appendix B
Reproducible Activity Organizers

All of the activity organizers found in each step in this Guidebook are available in this Appendix for your convenience.

Activity Organizer 1.1 – Select a Focus Theme

Focus Themes (Knowledge Loom Spotlights)	**School Improvement Goals**		
Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas			
Cultural Relevance in Teaching			
Early Literacy			
Middle School Mathematics			
Professional Development			
School, Family, Community Partnerships			
Teaching with Technology			
Technology Leadership			

Which of the focus themes scored the highest? This is the spotlight that you will use when completing other steps in The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Note it here:

Knowledge Loom Spotlight _____

Now that you have identified a focus theme, list the improvement goals you selected to address as you explore this theme.

_____

_____

Activity Organizer 1.1 – Select a Focus Theme

When this organizer is complete, you will have:

- Pinpointed the focus themes that are most closely tied to your stated school improvement efforts,
- Identified a single spotlight with which to work on The Knowledge Loom, and
- Set school improvement goals upon which to focus your work.

List three key school improvement goals in the boxes across the top of the organizer. Put an asterisk next to focus themes most important to you (determine this by examining your guiding documents and discussing them with colleagues). Rate on a scale of 1 through 3 (3 being the most significant) the impact that each of the marked focus themes has on the three identified goals.

Focus Themes (Knowledge Loom Spotlights)	**School Improvement Goals**		
	Student Achievement	*Teacher Satisfaction*	*Effective Leadership*
Adolescent Literacy * in the Content Areas	3	3	2
Cultural Relevance in Teaching			
Early Literacy			
Middle School Mathematics			
Professional Development *	3	3	1
School, Family, Community Partnerships			
Teaching With Technology *	3	1	3
Technology Leadership			

Sample

Which of the focus themes scored the highest? This is the spotlight that you will use when completing other steps in The Knowledge Loom Guidebook. Note it here:

Knowledge Loom Spotlight *Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas*

Now that you have identified a focus theme, list the improvement goals you selected to address as you explore this theme.

1. *Increased student achievement in literacy*
2. *Teacher cooperation for literacy instruction in all content areas*
3. *Demonstrated support (time and resources) for literacy initiatives at leadership level*

Activity Organizer 1.2 – Input Your Ideas

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Record your thoughts in response to the "Input Your Ideas" question on The Knowledge Loom.

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 1.3 – Learning From Colleagues

Extension: Reflection

Reflect on what colleagues had to say about the "Input Your Ideas" question in your selected spotlight on The Knowledge Loom. Are their ideas similar to yours? What is different? What is a surprise? What did you learn from their ideas?

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 2.1 – Best Practices Assessment Tool

Effective Research-based Practices/Programs	Current Level of Practice Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5	Current Evidence of Practice Describe the observable evidence for this practice at your site.	Importance/ Priority Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5		1 2 3 4 5

Activity Organizer 2.1 – Best Practices Assessment Tool

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be familiar with the best practices listed for your chosen Knowledge Loom spotlight/focus theme,
- Know which of these practices are most critical to your own school improvement efforts, and
- Be able to determine specific performance measures that will help you evaluate progress toward implementation of the best practices/benchmarks.

Record the best practice in the left column. Rate the current level of that practice in your school. List specific evidence of that practice. Rate its priority to your school's improvement goals. (You will need multiple copies of this organizer.)

Selected Spotlight Title *Professional Development*

Effective Research-based Practices/Programs	**Current Level of Practice** Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5	**Current Evidence of Practice** Describe the observable evidence for this practice at your site.	**Importance/ Priority** Low 1 2 Moderate 3 4 High 5
Professional development should be based on analyses of the differences between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.	(1) 2 3 4 5	*Only those grade levels requiring state testing meet annually after standardized test results are released to discuss performance gaps.*	1 2 3 4 (5)
Professional development should be primarily school-based and built into the day-to-day work of teaching.	1 2 (3) 4 5	*About 25% of instructional teams meet weekly to share instructional problems and strategies.* *Teachers regularly use instant electronic messaging to update each other on issues about students assigned in common.*	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning, including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and new perspectives.	1 (2) 3 4 5	*Outside presenters are brought in periodically to give workshops; follow-up is generally dependent on individuals.*	1 2 (3) 4 5
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.	(1) 2 3 4 5	*School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference.* *A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences.*	1 2 3 4 (5)

Activity Organizer 2.2 – Performance Measures and Next Steps

What are we doing now? (Current Evidence)	What do we want to be doing? (Future Evidence)	What are our next steps?

Activity Organizer 2.2 – Performance Measures and Next Steps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Identify current evidence of a best practice in action at your site,
- Identify additional performance measures (future evidence), and
- Begin to list next steps to accomplish your goals.

Complete a separate organizer for each selected best practice. First, list the best practice on the organizer. Then, in the left-hand column, list any current evidence of that practice in action in your school (this can be taken from Activity Organizer 2.1). In the middle column, list future evidence that you hope to see that will indicate when the practice is effectively and systemically implemented and working (performance measures/success measures). In the third column, outline steps you need to take to implement this practice.

Best Practice/Benchmark: *Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.*

What are we doing now? (Current Evidence)	**Performance Measure: What do we want to be doing? (Future Evidence)**	**What are our next steps?**
School has a policy whereby teachers can be granted release time once a year to attend a one-day workshop or conference. *A few teachers ask to attend special-interest conferences*	*Have teachers select the professional development topics of most interest and organize internal trainings.* *Develop training cohorts with the school that can plan and lead trainings based on local needs and expertise.* *Provide stipends or incentives for in-house trainers.* *Staff development done in a new way—not just planned workshops.*	*Create a task force that represents grade levels/departments. Task force interviews teachers about topics of interest for professional development.* *Ask principal to investigate local/state funds to support stipends.* *Investigate scheduling options so that instructional or departmental teams can meet regularly to learn from one another.* *Encourage teachers to sit in on a colleague's class. Post one tip we learned on school's electronic bulletin board.*

SAMPLE

Activity Organizer 2.3 – Colleagues as Resources

Extension: Reflection

Based on the conversations you had about evidence of best practices already found in your school, what skills do you or your team already possess that others need?

What did you learn today about what someone else is doing that could influence what you do?

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 2.4 – Connecting With Colleagues

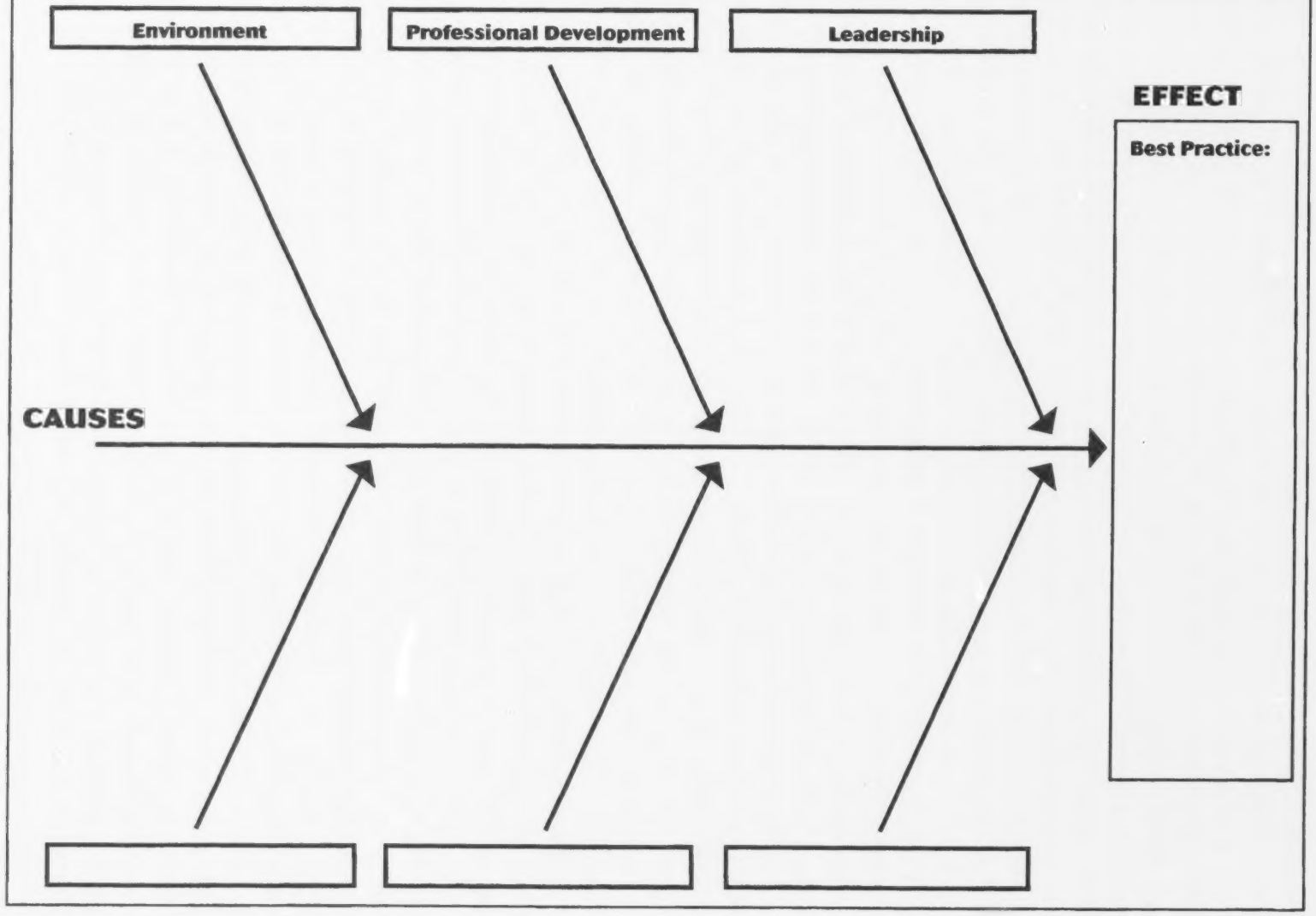
Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List three strategies for connecting with colleagues identified on the previous page to share what you know or to learn from them. Set a date for accomplishing the connections and a plan for putting new knowledge into action.

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors



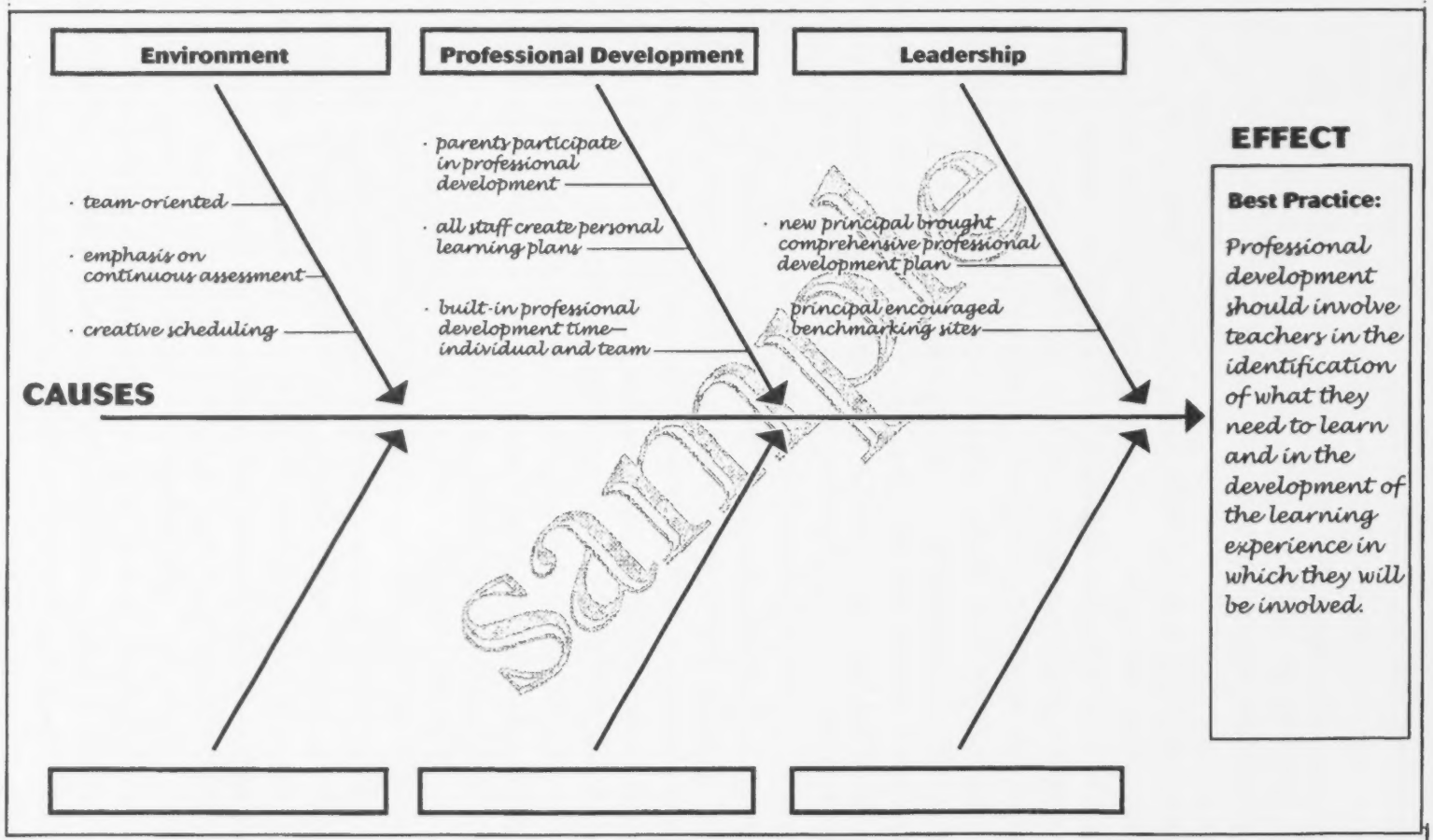
Selected Story Name _____

Location _____

Activity Organizer 3.1–Analyze Success Factors

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have analyzed the causes (success factors) that led to the implementation of a best practice at a selected site.

Select a story from The Knowledge Loom and fill in its name/location. Record the best practice it exemplifies in the EFFECT box. Three categories are already listed on the organizer. Feel free to change them and/or add others. List key data in each category. Complete one worksheet for each selected site/story you wish to study.


Environment
Professional Development
Leadership
· team-oriented
· emphasis on continuous assessment
· creative scheduling
· parents participate in professional development
· all staff create personal learning plans
· built-in professional development time—individual and team
· new principal brought comprehensive professional development plan
· principal encouraged benchmarking sites
CAUSES
EFFECT
Best Practice:
Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experience in which they will be involved.
SAMPLE

Selected Story Name Samuel Mason Elementary School

Location Roxbury, MA

Activity Organizer 3.2 – Identify Performance Gaps

Success Factors	Gap ✓+, ✓-, X	Effect on Goals

Activity Organizer 3.2 – Identify Performance Gaps

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be aware of performance gaps between your school improvement group and the success-story group, and
- Understand what the impact of these gaps is on reaching your goals and be ready to identify action items that help toward reaching your goals.

Under the Success Factors heading, list items from the completed copies of Activity Organizer 3.1 that you feel are most important to successfully implement the best practice being studied. Record the differences between these items (story's success factors) and your own site's practices (✓+, ✓-, ×). Reflect on what impact you believe this difference is having on reaching your school improvement goals.

Success Factors	Gap ✓+, ✓-, ×	Effect on Goals
Weekly meetings to study and apply strategies	×	*Strategies we present aren't sinking in because we don't allow time during the week.*
Analyzing student data	✓-	*We do this, but only once a year, after standardized tests—can't be ongoing and can't be embedded that way.*

Sample

Activity Organizer 3.3: Share Success Stories

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List colleagues to whom you want to send selected stories. (List name and location of story site next to name of colleague.)

Name	E-Mail	Story Site

Note: To relocate the stories at a later time online, click the "Search" tab on any Knowledge Loom page. Type the name of the school in the keyword box on the search form and click the submit button.

Items to discuss with the success story contacts:

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 3.4: Share Your Tip for School Improvement

Extension: Reflection

Make notes about your tip or success story:

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 4.1 – Reviewing the Research

Practice:	
Research Summary Notes	
1) Important points to remember. 2) What needs further investigation?	
Research to Read	
How can this support our school improvement efforts?	

Activity Organizer 4.1 – Reviewing the Research

When this activity organizer is complete, you will:

- Be able to point to academic research that backs up the school improvement work you are doing, and
- Identify and select items that need further study.

Read the research summary for the best practice you are studying and take notes. Reflect on what this means to your school improvement goals/needs as you fill in the rest of the organizer. Items for further study can be selected from the reference bibliography. Complete a separate organizer for each best practice you are studying.

Practice:	*Professional development should be based on analyses of the difference between (a) actual student performance and (b) goals and standards for student learning.*
Research Summary Notes	*These analyses point out the usefulness of alternative strategies for student learning and school improvement, paying close attention to the gains made by diverse types of learners.*

1) Important points to remember. 2) What needs further investigation?

We need to examine our school improvement goals and analyze individual student performance in relation to those goals. Find research that aligns school improvement goals with student achievement. Find research that helps us explore different strategies for student learning.

Research to Read	*"Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success"*

How can this support our school improvement efforts?

This report from the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) says that when teachers take control of their own professional development, student success increases. I think we can use this report to make the case that teachers analyzing student data should be at the center of our school improvement efforts.

Sample

Activity Organizer 4.2 – Reviewing Related Web Resources

Practice:	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	

Activity Organizer 4.2 – Reviewing Related Web Resources

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have:

- Identified several Web resources that will support your school improvement activities, and
- Thought about ways these resources can directly help your work.

List the practice and Web resources that you are exploring. Evaluate how the resources can help your school improvement efforts.

Practice:	*Not related to a particular practice. General resource for professional development best practices.*
Resource Title/URL:	*American Federation of Teachers: Professional Development* *http://www.aft.org/Edissues/teacherquality/prodev.htm*
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	*Lists the characteristics of good professional development programs. Exemplary programs are highlighted.* *Could give us some ideas about who pays for various types of programs to help support new efforts we are trying to get off the ground offering teacher stipends. U.S. Department of Education sponsors a Model Professional Development Awards Program. We could review some of the winners and set as one of our goals to create a similar program, field test it for a year, and depending on results, consider applying.*
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	
Resource Title/URL:	
Description and notes: How can this resource help our school improvement efforts?	

Sample

Activity Organizer 4.3–Discuss Research and Resources

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

List your plans for sharing research information and resource lists with colleagues and the community.

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 4.4: Supporting a National Learning Network

Extension: Reflection

Record notes about helpful Web resources you discovered and that you plan to post with your comments to "Share Your Story" as a tip for others.

Resource	URL	Tips

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 5.1 – Create an Action Plan

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Goals or Milestones	Action Items

Activity Organizer 5.1 – Create an Action Plan

When this activity organizer is complete, you will have a list of steps and actions to take toward reaching your long-term goals.

Begin by jotting your long-term goals in the first column. Discuss and define two or three big steps toward achieving each long-term goal; write the short-term goals in the middle column. Create your to-do list in the Action Items column.

Long-Term Goals	Short-Term Goals or Milestones	Action Items
Get teachers involved in analyzing student data and using analyses as basis for setting their own professional development plans.	Improve technology tools and procedures for collecting and sharing student data.	Talk to Director of Tech. Test new student info system. Find out about intranet.
	Restructure school schedule to allow for team data analysis meetings.	Talk to scheduling committee. Develop a prototype schedule. Investigate funds for release time.
	Establish submission and review procedure for PD plans.	
Make collaborative problem-solving the basis of all professional development offered in the district.		

SAMPLE

Activity Organizer 5.2 – Our Organization's Success Story

When you complete this activity organizer, you will have:

- A record of where you started your improvement process and why,
- A record of the steps toward realizing your goals, and
- A record of results related to your efforts.

On separate paper, record information about each of the fields noted in bold on this template for documenting a Knowledge Loom success story. You will write lists of facts, followed by a narrative (The Facts and The Story). Record the facts over time. Write your story summary and narrative after all the facts have been recorded. E-mail your completed story (or questions about the development of your story) to loom@lab.brown.edu.

THE FACTS

These can be recorded as bulleted lists, charts, and graphs of progress over time (rather than in narrative form). They are intended to give you and readers an overview of your steps to success.

Selected Spotlight Title:
This relates to the focus theme of your improvement planning. Your story will be linked to this Knowledge Loom spotlight. **Note:** Some success stories might link to more than one spotlight, such as Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas and Professional Development.

Selected Best Practice(s):
Copy one or two of these from the list of best practices displayed in your selected Knowledge Loom spotlight. These correlate with the benchmarks or long-term goals represented in your action plan and will be the focus of your work and your success story activities and results.

Best practice #1:

Best practice #2:

Name of School:
City, State:
Grade Levels:
Setting: (urban, suburban, rural)
Type: (public, private)

Demographics:
What is the size of your staff and student population? Are there other distinguishing characteristics such as free and reduced lunch, number of native languages spoken, special-needs population, transient population, etc.

Background and Context:
What is currently going on at your site that prompted you to focus on the best practice(s) you chose to integrate into your work? In a sense, this is your problem statement. And, your action plan is your long-term solution.

Design and Implementation:
How did you/will you implement the best practice(s)? What systems will be put in place? Including a copy of your action plan in this section is helpful.

Activity Organizer 5.2 continued

Results:
Over time, note things like changes in test scores and changes in student or faculty attitudes and practices. Record success measures (evidence) that your action plan is moving forward. You will want to note both qualitative and quantitative changes. Test scores are not the only measure of success. Anecdotes add story value and are good illustrations for others.

Replication Details:
As you work with your improvement plan, keep a running list of things you implemented, what worked, and what needed adjustment. Think of this as a journal that documents your path toward improvement. These notes will serve as tips for others who might try to adapt what you did to their own situations.

Contact Information:
Name, address, phone, e-mail of a person at your site who could talk to others about this success.

THE STORY
Once you have listed all the facts about your success, use this information to write a short summary and a feature story about your success. A helpful story-writing guide and story samples can be accessed online at http://www.lab.brown.edu/bpo/psguide/writingguide.html
Scroll to bottom of page and click on "Writing Guide Appendix E."

Short Summary:
A list of bullets (3-5 that clue the reader in to the main points about your story) and a 150-word overview that tells people the real turn-around story or the essence of your success model.

Feature Story:
A 500- to 750-word narrative that expands on the summary, reads like a magazine article feature, relates the story of your success, and will inspire others.

Activity Organizer 5.3: Disseminating Your Action Plan

If you have been using the Guidebook prior to completing this activity, you know that a good way to engage with Knowledge Loom content is to share your thoughts and ideas about it with local colleagues, members of the broader education community, and members of The Knowledge Loom online community. Now that you have created an organizational action plan with long-term goals, milestones, and action items, list ways you can disseminate this plan, get feedback, and garner buy-in from all stakeholders.

Extension: Broadening the Conversation

Action plan dissemination and ongoing communication ideas:

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Activity Organizer 5.4: Personal Action Planning

Extension: Reflection

Personal action items that support your organization's action plan:

Note: If you have not already done so, take The Knowledge Loom tour to get better acquainted with what the site offers. Click the "TOUR" button located on the home page at:

http://knowledgeloom.org

Appendix C
Evaluation Forms

Participants' Evaluation Form

Facilitator's Evaluation of The Knowledge Loom and Guidebook

The Knowledge Loom team is interested in how you used the Guidebook and The Knowledge Loom Web site. Please take the time to complete and mail us the Facilitator's Evaluation of The Knowledge Loom and Guidebook found in this appendix.

Participants' Evaluation Form

Topic of Professional Development Activity _____

Facilitator's Name _____

Date _____

Were the goals of this professional development activity clear? _____ Yes _____ No
What were the goals of the activity?

Were the goals successfully accomplished? _____ Yes _____ No
If no, why not?

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What was the best/strongest aspect of this activity?

What suggestions do you have for improving this activity?

What did you learn from this activity?

Will this activity have an impact on your teaching practice? _____ Yes _____ No
How?

After having completed this professional development activity, what do you feel should be your next steps?
(Use the back of this form to explain.)

Facilitator's Evaluation of The Knowledge Loom and Guidebook

Facilitator Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Please check all that apply:

_____ Administrator/Coordinator from: _____ state _____ district _____ school
_____ Classroom teacher _____ elementary _____ middle _____ high _____ other
_____ University
_____ Other _____

Organization: _____

City/State: _____

E-mail: _____

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1. Please describe the position/grade levels of participants in your professional development activities using the Guidebook.

2. What was your goal for using The Knowledge Loom and the Guidebook?

3. How did you use The Knowledge Loom and the Guidebook? (Check all that apply)

_____ I used all the steps in the Guidebook in consecutive order.

_____ I used Step 1 first, then used all the steps in the Guidebook but in different order.

_____ I used selected activities/activity organizers as stand-alone professional development activities.

_____ I adapted selected activities/activity organizers to support other professional development activities that I developed myself.

_____ I was inspired by some of the activities and ideas in the Guidebook to create my own activities.

_____ I used The Knowledge Loom Web site content, but did not use the Guidebook.

_____ Other, please explain:

4. If you found specific activities or activity organizers from the Guidebook to be useful, please note which ones, why each was helpful, and how you applied it.

Step_____ Activity_____

Step_____ Activity_____

Step_____ Activity_____

5. What Knowledge Loom spotlight themes have you used for professional development?

_____ Adolescent Literacy in the Content Areas

_____ Cultural Relevance in Teaching

_____ Early Literacy, a National Perspective

_____ Early Literacy in the Northeast

_____ Good Models of Teaching With Technology

_____ Middle School Math

_____ Professional Development

_____ School, Family, and Community Partnerships

_____ Technology Leadership

_____ Other _____

6. How would you rate The Knowledge Loom Web site content on the following criteria? (Circle your responses.)

Overall quality	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Presentation	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Usefulness of content	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Suitability to intended purpose/audience	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Meeting your needs and expectations	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A

If it did not meet your needs, please explain briefly:

7. a. What did you like best about The Knowledge Loom Web site?

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b. What could be added or improved to make it better suited to your needs?

8. How would you rate the Guidebook on the following criteria?

Overall quality	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Presentation	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Usefulness of content	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Suitability to intended purpose/audience	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A
Meeting your needs and expectations	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Fair	Poor	N/A

If it did not meet your needs, please explain briefly:

9. a. What did you like best about the Guidebook?

b. What could be added or improved to make it better suited to your needs?

10. Please indicate whether any of the following describe how The Knowledge Loom and the Guidebook may have affected you and your work.
(Circle your responses.)

Increased awareness of important new skills and knowledge	yes	no	N/A
Informed decision-making and planning	yes	no	N/A
May change or enhance the quality of professional development practices	yes	no	N/A
May change or enhance practices affecting student performance	yes	no	N/A
Other possible impact: (Please comment below)	yes	no	N/A

11. What other follow-up products or Knowledge Loom content topics would you find useful?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation. Your comments will help shape our products and services.

Please send to:

ATT: Knowledge Loom Guidebook Evaluation
Education Alliance/
Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University
222 Richmond Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903-4226
FAX: 401/421-7650

Appendix D
References

These references support the methodologies and thinking employed in the publication, *Using The Knowledge Loom: Ideas and Tools for Collaborative Professional Development.*

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